

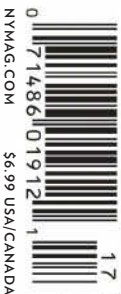
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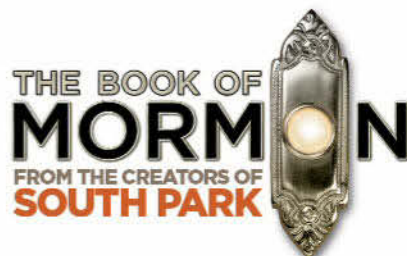


THE NEW YORK TIMES BEN BRANTLEY

BEST NEW AMERICAN MUSICAL OF THE LAST 25 YEARS." VOGUE • WINNER TONY AWARD' **BEST** BOOK OF A MUSICAL • "BY FAR THE **BEST** NEW MUSICAL OF ORIGINAL SCORE • "THE FUNNIEST, **BEST** PERFORMED, **BEST** SUNG, **BEST** WRITTEN MUSICAL OF OUR TIME." DAILY EXPRESS • "PROVES WHAT BROADWAY WINNER TONY AWARD' **BEST** FEATURED ACTRESS IN A MUSICAL • WINNER TONY AWARD' **BEST** DIRECTION OF A MUSICAL • "THE **BEST** CHOREOGRAPHY IN COMFORTABLY TRADITIONAL SHOW, IN THE **BEST** WAY." THE NEW YORK OBSERVER • WINNER TONY AWARD' **BEST** ORCHESTRATIONS • VOGUE **BEST** DESIGN • ASSOCIATED PRESS #1 **BEST** SHOW OF THE YEAR • DRAMA DESK AWARDS **BEST** MUSIC • "DEPICTS RELIGION AT ITS IDEALIZED **BEST**," RELIGIOUS **BEST** DIRECTOR OF A MUSICAL • "BAD TASTE IN THE **BEST** TRADITION." FINANCIAL TIMES • ITUNES **BEST** BROADWAY SOUNDTRACK OF THE OUTER CRITICS CIRCLE AWARD **BEST** NEW BROADWAY MUSICAL • WINNER TONY AWARD' **BEST** SOUND DESIGN • "SIMPLY OUTRAGEOUS IN THE **BEST** BBC 2 ARTS SHOW • NPR TOP 50 **BEST** ALBUMS OF THE YEAR • OUTER CRITICS CIRCLE AWARD **BEST** DIRECTOR OF A MUSICAL • "THE **BEST** MUSICAL TO "UNSELFCONSCIOUSLY USES THE LANGUAGE OF BROADWAY AT ITS POPULIST **BEST**." EVENING STANDARD • AMAZON.COM TOP 100 **BEST** SELLING ALBUMS

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Just about everything in this happily dance-drunk show moves with a spring in its step, as if the newly liberated Paris after World War II were an enchanted place in which the laws of gravity no longer applied.

'An American in Paris' is very much a traditional Broadway musical, with a book by the playwright **Craig Lucas** that amplifies the story line to witty and vivifying effect. An almost equal collaborator with Mr. Wheeldon and Mr. Lucas is the great designer **Bob Crowley**, who provides both the sets and costumes, and whose work here outshines anything currently on Broadway in its blend of elegance, wit and sophistication.

George Gershwin and **Ira Gershwin's** songbook provides the whirring engine that drives all the exuberant motion on stage. Mr. Wheeldon's buoyant dances and the heat-generating performances infuse the evening with the headlong energy of youth. 'An American in Paris' weds music and movement, song and story with such exhilarating brio that you may find your heart alight with a longing to be swept up in the dance."

—*The New York Times*



ELEGANT AND ENERGETIC, WITTY AND ROMANTIC!

Robert Fairchild is a great dancer, a dreamboat singer and actor who makes everything look as easy as breathing. 'S Wonderful? The guy's even better—'S Revelation.

Leanne Cope is a pixie-sized powerhouse."

—*Daily News*

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Just how extraordinary is unspooled all evening with exuberant, sweeping innovation, dark historical understanding and a **BIG, SMART HEART.**"

—*Newsday*

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AN OLD-FASHIONED, BIG-HEARTED SPARE-NO-EXPENSE BROADWAY ROMANCE.

'An American in Paris' instantly catapults **Christopher Wheeldon** into the ranks of top-tier director-choreographers, by which I mean Jerome Robbins and Bob Fosse. It's been years—decades, really—since I last saw production numbers that were infused with the kind of rich, sustained creativity that Wheeldon gives us throughout. Once you've seen it, you'll know what you've been missing, and find it hard ever again to settle for less."

—*The Wall Street Journal*

"A Paris to Swoon For!"

Wholly contagious joy of motion is packed into every kick, lift, tap and leap of 'An American in Paris.'

The exhilaration is especially catching when it's being spread by the evening's leading man, **Robert Fairchild**, whose breakout performance is a combination of Gene Kelly's earthy athleticism and Hugh Jackman's self-assured showmanship."

—*The Washington Post*

"RAVISHING!" IT'S HARD TO BREATHE, NOT ONLY BECAUSE THE LOVE STORY IS SO ROMANTIC, BUT BECAUSE WE RARELY SEE THIS KIND OF DANCING ON BROADWAY.

AN ENCHANTING AND DEEPLY MOVING EXPERIENCE!"

—*Variety*

**"I WOULD BEG,
BORROW OR STEAL
TO SEE IT AGAIN!"**

—*Financial Times*



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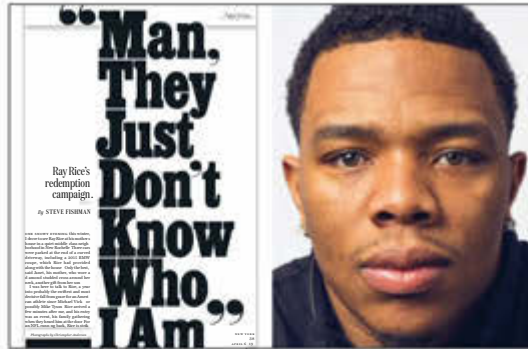
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Comments



1 Jason Zengerle's inquiry into Hillary Clinton's prospects as the Democratic front-runner arrived a week before she announced her candidacy ("Is Hillary Clinton Any Good at Running for President?" April 6-19). At the heart of the story was the question of how much Clinton's chances rest on her capabilities as a candidate and how much on the country's fundamentals, including the economy and demographics. *Washington Monthly's* Ed Kilgore argued that Clinton will be a better candidate in 2016 than she was in 2008. "Even if Democrats are disappointed or even shocked by how HRC handles this or that 'moment' ... she remains one of the most heavily vetted proto-candidates in American political history. Most of the mistakes she made in 2008—you know, letting Mark Penn be her top 'strategist,' spending too much money and capital in Iowa, underestimating the importance of later caucuses—are either avoidable or irrelevant this time around. And how she handled adversity in 2008 remains as relevant as ever." Some commenters felt that Zengerle left out an important element of the equation. "The author might consider how Hillary Clinton's gender, and the expectations that arise from it, impact her behavior," wrote Brittany.stalsburg. Women candidates like Clinton, the commenter wrote, "must not be too nice or feminine, lest they be characterized as too soft or not serious enough. At the same time, they have to be tough and assertive, but not too much lest they come off as too aggressive or mean or callous." Irin Carmon, a national reporter at MSNBC, saw the gender issue crop up elsewhere in the article: "A smart piece," she tweeted, "that I think is undermined by not quoting more than one female expert."

2 Steve Fishman's story on disgraced Ravens football player Ray Rice's "redemption campaign" ("Man, They Just Don't Know Who I Am," April 6-19) sparked thoughtful analysis by sports observers, including Deadspin's Greg Howard, who argued that public forgiveness of a fallen star rests less on the sincerity of his apology than on his talent. "If Rice plays next year, it won't be because of a heroic trek through adversity, and it certainly won't be because journalists chronicled it. If he doesn't, it won't be because of a failed redemption tour, or because he's a bad person. It'll be because he's a bad player, or at least not good enough to be worth answering questions about; not because the league forced him out, but because he was already on his way." Many readers agreed with commenter ItaVero's assessment that Rice should be barred from playing in the upcoming season. "If this guy was working on a cure for cancer, we could talk about forgiving him and getting him back in the lab," wrote ItaVero. "When it comes to running a ball down a field, I think the message sent by barring him from the sport is much more valuable than the marginal value of choosing him over any other guy."

3 "Like the Wizard of Oz, anchors have often been fronts for those pulling the strings behind the curtain: governments and sponsors, not to mention those who actually do the work of reporting the news," wrote Frank Rich in his article questioning the institution of the anchorman ("A Dumb Job," April 6-19). Time.com's daily roundup of the best ideas of the day put Rich's assessment as No. 1: "It's time to give up the uniquely American institution of the network

anchorman." Television professionals weighed in, including a former CBS San Francisco reporter, Hank Plante, who commented that "in three decades of TV news, I always enjoyed reporting more than anchoring, perhaps because I began as a newspaper reporter. But the game is rigged against real reporters. I once had an agent tell me that my corporate bosses would give a \$100,000 raise to an anchor before they would give an extra \$10,000 to a reporter." Media Post's Adam Buckman defended anchor-men: "The ratings tell the story. While this magazine commentary is relegating news anchors and, by extension, their 'old school' network newscasts to the trash heap of mass-media history, I'm looking at the total audience figures for the three network newscasts and finding they're not doing badly at all," he wrote. "They're still worth money to the networks that produce and air them. Ergo, contrary to what New York magazine might think, there is something at stake here." Charlie Warzel, a former NBC employee, agreed, arguing that in his experience "anchors are very involved in the production and planning. Not to say that that makes them as important as the reporters, but it's not like they're only a well coiffed head." Rich waded back into the debate after Pat Kiernan, the longtime morning-news anchor of NY1, tweeted, "Frank Rich says I have a 'dumb job.' Says the TV anchor job is an 'inane institution.'" Rich tweeted back: "The subject of this piece is evening news network anchors." "Understood," replied Kiernan. "But your commentary applies to local news as well. It's not lost on me that I get paid to read newspapers aloud."

➔ Send correspondence to comments@nymag.com. Or go to nymag.com to respond to individual stories.

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The National Interest: Jonathan Chait

Negotiate This
The paranoia behind
the machismo
behind the Republican
response to everything.

TWO YEARS AGO, Senator Rand Paul electrified Washington by delivering a nearly 13-hour-long filibuster denouncing the Obama administration's use of lethal drones and its refusal to rule out using them domestically in extreme circumstances, which he painted as a dystopian nightmare. "I will speak until I can no longer speak," Paul said. "I will speak as long as it takes, until the alarm is sounded from coast to coast that our Constitution is important, that your rights to trial by jury are precious, that no American should be killed by a drone on American soil without first being charged with a crime, without first being found to be guilty by a court." Paul was joined by many members of his party, including Ted Cruz, Mitch McConnell, and Marco Rubio. The spectacle appeared to shake the Republican Party out of its congenital hawkishness and help it apply its libertarian impulses toward the conduct of foreign policy. Neoconservatives watched the events with undisguised alarm—John McCain dismissed Paul and Cruz as "wacko birds."

The return of Iran to the forefront of the foreign-policy debate has snuffed out Paul's libertarian moment and restored the GOP to its natural state. Two weeks ago, Paul declared his campaign for president. The threat of flying death machines no longer inspired the senator to speak until he could speak no more. (He never mentioned drones at all.) Instead, Paul cast his foreign-policy vision in terms mostly congenial to his former foes. He promised to "name the enemy"—radical Islam—and though he didn't denounce Obama's attempt to negotiate with Iran, he was on the defensive, insisting Obama act from a position of strength.

The Iranian nuclear program poses a serious and complex challenge to American interests. Preventing a country determined to get a nuclear bomb from building one is hard. The main impediment is knowledge, and once a state's scientists have acquired that, very little can stand in their way. The Obama administration has struck an agreement with Iran that, if filled out with agreeable details, would seriously curtail its uranium-enrichment program and put in place inspectors who will warn us if Iran ignores its commitments. Whether a true agreement will be reached—and whether the world could enforce the deal's terms—remains an open question. A handful of moderate senators, like Tennessee's Bob Corker, who fashioned a bill that would give Congress time to review the lifting of sanctions, seemed able to grapple with the impossibility of striking a deal that guarantees Iran will never build a nuke and so were amenable to strategies that might slow it down.

The conservative movement, though, has failed to generate a serious response. Liberal critics have accused Republicans of plotting to set the United States on a course for war, and certainly many right-wing figures have openly advocated for military strikes, displaying the same insouciance toward warfare that did not work out terribly well a decade ago. Senator Tom Cotton, after writing a letter to Iran's leaders warning them not to trust any bargain with Obama, casually mentioned that a bombing campaign could be carried out and its objectives achieved within a few days. This was the familiar neoconservative calculation, or lack thereof: an assumption that our enemies would be so cowed by a display of American power that they would not mount a response of any kind.

But there was another instinct at work, one that reflected something other than a conscious strategy to foment war: Conservative critics find the very fact of negotiation with Iran disturbing. They see it as validating a noxious regime and distrust any American leader who would bargain with them.

Rubio complained that Obama was treating Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu with more hostility than the Iranian regime: "He would not dare say the things about the supreme leader of Iran now that he is saying about the prime minister of Israel, because he wouldn't want to endanger his peace deal or his arms deal that he's working out with them." Numerous conservatives have likewise linked the Iran negotiations with liberal discontent over a religious-freedom law passed recently in Indiana that may have enabled anti-gay discrimination. "Do you know that Apple Incorporated has more stores selling iPhones and iPads in Tehran than they do in all of Indiana?" Rush Limbaugh asked in a rage.

None of these claims rest on sound footing. Obama has said extremely unkind things about Iran (e.g., "a regime that has brutalized its own people"). Apple has zero stores in Iran. What these delusions tell us is that many conservatives are

Profiles in Cowardice

"[Nuclear nonproliferation] is one of the greatest hoaxes ever foisted on the American people."

WILLIAM HENRY CHAMBERLIN, 1969

"The propaganda of Communist China reflects their ancient arrogance, and now the President of the United States goes hat in hand to Peking."

FRANK S. MEYER, 1971

"[Arms control is] a poor way of rewarding defenders of freedom in Western Europe who fought heroically against the tide of unilateral pacifism that threatened to make Soviet dominance in intermediate-range nuclear forces complete."

BRIAN CROZIER, 1988

unable to distinguish between negotiation and moral approval, that they fail to understand the strategic basis for negotiating with an enemy under any circumstance.

The 1945 Yalta Agreement, in which Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill negotiated postwar boundaries with Joseph Stalin, was widely distrusted by conservatives and seen as enabling Soviet domination; it became the original basis for Joseph McCarthy's ravings about the foreign-policy Establishment's treachery, which he called "a conspiracy so immense and an infamy so black as to dwarf any previous such venture in the history of man." Conservatives have since proceeded to repeat versions of the same critique in attacking every major negotiation with an American adversary. Indeed, if there is such a thing as a deal with an enemy state robust enough to satisfy conservatives, no American president of either party has ever been shrewd or tough enough to strike it. In the 1950s, the "Bricker Amendment"—a scheme to amend the Constitution to limit the president's ability to make foreign treaties like Yalta—became a conservative obsession. It failed mainly because of the opposition of President Eisenhower, thus furnishing conservatives with a major reason to distrust or even loathe him.

In the 1960s, *National Review* denounced the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty as "immoral, foolish, and probably impractical, a policy that makes nonsense of our defensive alliance in Europe, that favors our enemy and slights our allies." (Ironically, the treaty is now the legal basis for the international effort to prevent Iran from obtaining nukes, which means the agreement conservatives originally denounced is now what they demand be upheld.)

Conservative columnists called Richard Nixon's opening to China "the liquidation of the anti-Communist stance of the American Government" and compared it to Neville Chamberlain's appeasement of Hitler. Nixon's policy of détente with the Soviet Union was "one of the greater triumphs of the Soviet propaganda machine," and the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty was "profoundly unwise."

Ronald Reagan ran for president as a staunch opponent of SALT, but nonetheless abided by its provisions until 1986. He went on to sign the INF Treaty, to massive right-wing dismay. Conservatives believed he had been "beguiled by Gorbachev, to the detriment of American interests," the *Times* reported. And, of course, when Obama sought to extend START in 2010, conservatives went ballistic.

Antipathy toward the act of negotiating turns out to be a through line connecting conservatives of both the isolationist and interventionist varieties and extending far beyond foreign policy. Discussions are conducted in secret, which makes them subject to paranoid interpretation. Compromising with a rival requires abandoning moral clarity. The language used to dismiss negotiating is often bellicose, even macho, but it is born of deep suspicion and insecurity. To give an inch—whether measured in centrifuges or in votes on routine bills that would avoid a government shutdown—is to risk total collapse. Life as we know it is terribly fragile.

Those gripped by such panic see treachery everywhere. Last week, Dick Cheney reappeared to denounce the Iran deal as a deliberate attempt at sabotage. "If you had somebody as president who wanted to take America down, who wanted to fundamentally weaken our position in the world and reduce our capacity to influence events, turn our back on our allies and encourage our adversaries," he told conservative radio host Hugh Hewitt, "it would look exactly like what Barack Obama's doing." ■

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Tech: Periscope Has a Star

Come watch Amanda Oleander.

“HEY, EVERYBODY!—oops!” An innocent automotive fumble causes the wipers to graze our Prius windshield. “Um, so we’re going to the Secret Jim Morrison Cave, and I just wanted to let you guys know that we’re on our way. Hey, Ecuador! What’s the cave all about? The cave is a secret cave in Corral Canyon, it’s really fun and beautiful and has beautiful views, and it’s the only place I get reception up there. So that’s really great for all of you guys. Hi, Panama!”

The woman in the driver’s seat is addressing her dash-mounted iPhone 5S as she waits at a stoplight in Santa Monica on a recent morning. Her name is Amanda Oleander. She’s 25 and upbeat and a Sagittarius, and since moving to Los Angeles two years ago, she’s worked as a freelance artist, an illustrator for *E!* Online, the director of client relations for a fledging app developer, and an extra in *The Hunger Games*. Perhaps most significantly, and definitely most randomly, in early April she was enjoying her status as the “most loved” person on the new social-media platform Periscope.

A mobile app that allows users to stream live video to any number of Earthlings who wish to watch, Periscope was purchased by Twitter in January for just south of \$100 million and kept in beta until March 26—the day its earliest adopters simulcasted the East Village gas-explosion fire. You might think of Periscope as webcamming meets Snapchat, with masturbating girls and dick pics replaced by rambling thoughts and quotidian walks. (Nudity

is banned.) Transmissions can be saved and viewed by curious parties for up to 24 hours. But the real fun is getting a notification during, say, a nightcap in New York and channel-surfing directly to Hong Kong, where someone is dashing through a verdant alley to lunch, then to Belo Horizonte, where a friend is detailing his morning-smoothie ritual. It’s an around-the-clock DIY reality show, a selfie network.

A few seconds after @amandaoleander opens Periscope, hundreds, sometimes thousands of people elect to have their phones taken over by a broadcast of whatever she’s doing. This boils down to time spent with an attractive young lady learning the ropes of a big city alongside a horde of invisible onlookers, whose presence is made known by a ticker of text chatter and the cartoonish flutter of colored hearts. One day she’s shooting the breeze or painting in her Mid-Wilshire studio. On another, she’s giving tours of L.A.’s most obvious attractions. This week began at LACMA, then the Griffith Observatory and the Grove. Now on to Malibu.

“You have to tap if you like what you’re watching.” She’s explaining the economy of hearts as we cruise up the Pacific Coast Highway, pecking her finger in the direction of Santa Barbara. “That’s how you go up in the most loved.” In the Periscope caste system, hearts are more important than followers. When we met earlier this month, Oleander had 2 million hearts. By last Friday, she had more than 5 million. Every new user is encouraged to follow the most-loved scopers, and, as of

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Hi from Brazil!

@iamallaboutnora

Would you date a 5'9 guy?

@valerymafioll

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350 ppl looking at your boobs lol

@funkyinnovator

What made u reach 3 mil hearts?

@keiththomson10

Wats going on miss x

@incredible_fit

I'm ur trainer u can't eat that today

@samuelanaya28

I'll buy you another donut

@petelo2000

Ur amazing

@oliverarany

I'm 18. So do wann go on a date

@photographershr

I'm new here sorry

@johnny__guitar

She has to many followers

@babylalaxo

cleavage today looking nice btw

@combatpug

Why are people so mean?

@mostafahmadeen

Hi I'm Mustafa from Jordan...

@cheesethebot

Do a funny face

@adel_s

Bonjour



yet, no celebrity has reached Oleander's level of cardiac acclaim. (She's also the only woman in the top ten.)

When Oleander joined the app, the day after it launched, she had around 2,500 Instagram followers—not totally out of the ordinary. But she's unflappably personable, an outgoing nerd, and she found herself very good at Persicope. You can easily spend the day with her, waking up together, retracing your steps before bed, making plans for tomorrow. She found the sudden attention startling. "I was like, *Is this a movie or something?*" At least one of her followers feels similarly. The first time I tuned in, @mikebarrone718 sent up a text bubble: "This app reminds me of the movie *Her*." Oleander tells me that once she reaches her goal of 100,000 followers, she wants to launch a world tour, meeting and painting with a network of friends she hasn't met yet.

She usually films herself, but today Oleander's friend Skye is acting as assistant camera operator from the passenger seat. Safety first. He comments on the comments of the last stream: "Some of these are funny; they're all like, 'Where are you from, bb?'" Oleander shrugs it off with a giggle as we pull onto the path leading to the trailhead.

Soon we're in the fabled Secret Jim Morrison Cave, where the Lizard King came to write. About a dozen day-trippers have beaten us here. "Hey, pass that J back!" says one gruff yet chill young woman. She offers the doobie to our gang after her turn. Oleander says thanks but no thanks and "Hey! Do any of you guys know about Persicope?"

"Paradise Cove?" asks another stoned hiker, confusing it with the name of a nearby beach.

"No, Persicope. It's this new app, and 200 people from around the world are tuning in right now, watching what we're doing."

This draws the attention of a third loiterer: "What?!"

Oleander scooches across the rocks to offer her phone by way of demonstration. "It's the No. 1 app now; if you just look it up, you should see it. You should add me on there." Lights up, camera on. "Okay. Hi! I'm @amandaoleander, where are you guys from?" Answers begin coming in: Brooklyn, Quebec City, Dubai, Seattle.

"A lot of people don't know about the cave," Oleander says to her phone, responding to one of her followers, "but now I guess you're right, it's not a secret anymore." She scans for more queries. One, about a swimsuit, she deems inappropriate and grounds for blocking. To another: "I'm not part of the Illuminati, no." KEVIN MCGARRY

Last Wednesday on Periscope...



Two adult men from Mobile, Alabama, pretended their sock puppets were on a blind date.

A girl in a polka-dot dress showed off her one-month-old yellow Lab puppy to a chorus of awwws.

A man in Brooklyn was courtside at the Nets-versus-Magic game, while

another man in Abu Dhabi was speeding down a deserted freeway at 4 a.m.

There was a livestream of Michelle Obama giving Alicia Keys an award at the Grammys on the Hills event, as well as one

showing a crew in North Carolina sharing a blunt.

A tech blogger drove to Tim Horton's for doughnuts.

The actress Soleil Moon Frye broadcast her kids playing in the backyard.

A teenage girl in California gave a tour of her lip-gloss collection.

Editors at Marie Claire and Cosmopolitan posed on an Iron Throne and

toasted each other with what appeared to be Champagne and

cupcakes, though the connection was a little fuzzy.

A helicopter feed of a police chase in St. Louis ended with cops arresting the suspect without injury.

The religion editor at the Huffington Post guided viewers through a candlelit meditation session.

College kids performed karaoke to "Party in the USA."

A raise-the-minimum-wage rally raged outside a McDonald's in San Diego.

One MSNBC reporter, on assignment in Iowa, filled

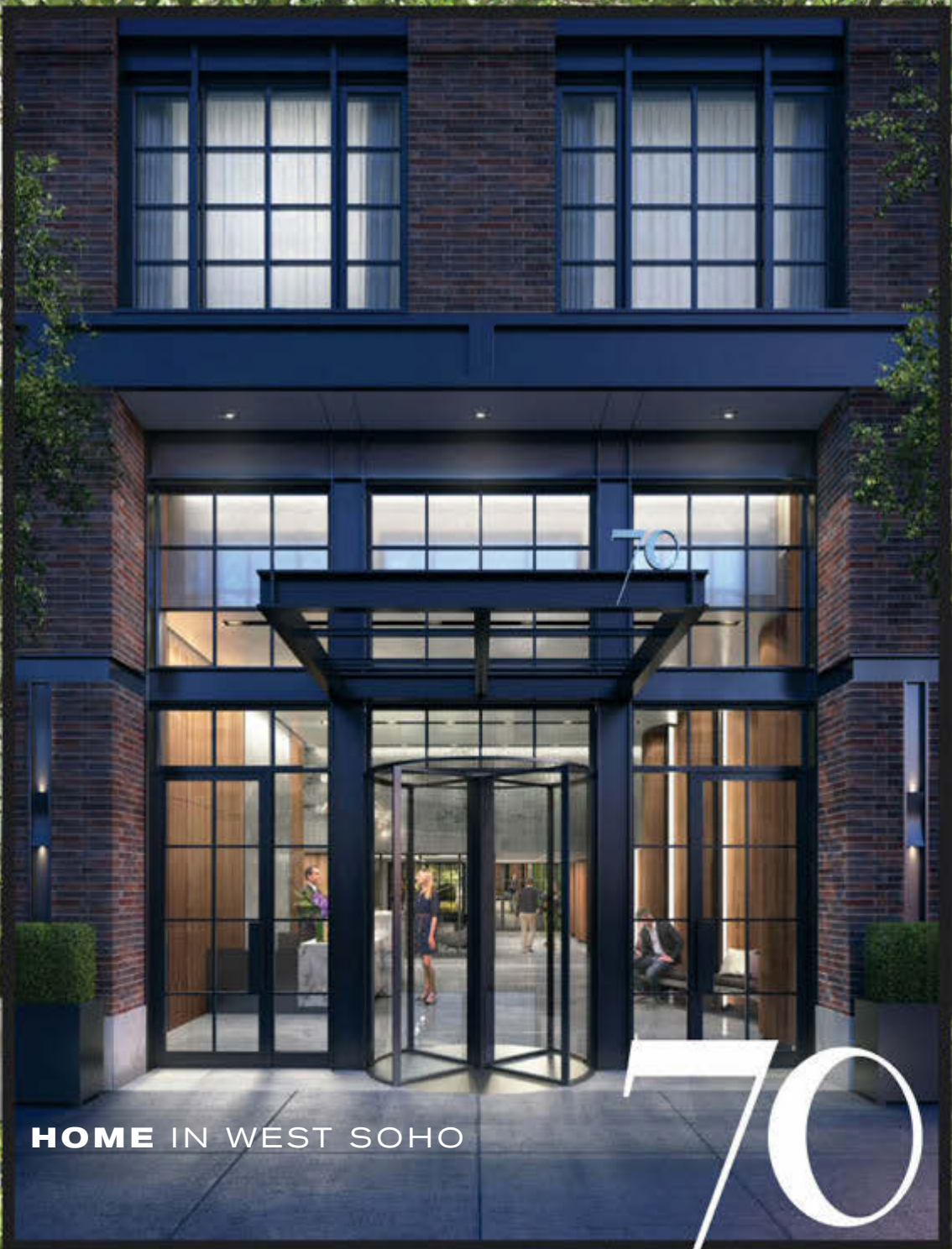
airtime while he waited and waited for Hillary Clinton's

"Scooby" van to show.

JESSICA ROY



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EXTELL



186 MINUTES WITH ...

Laura Ricketts

In the Chicago Cubs' right-wing ruling clan, there's one Democrat, one daughter, and one LGBT activist. She loves her family a lot.

BY MARIN COGAN

THAT'S WHY I was looking at you like that," Trudie Acheatel, a Chicago Cubs fan, is saying. She gazes up admiringly, from beneath a bucket hat loaded with Cubs pins, at the sparkly logo pendant worn by Cubs co-owner Laura Ricketts. "I wasn't staring—"

"Oh, I didn't notice," Ricketts interjects. She and two of her three brothers, Tom and Todd, are on a small stage at

the Sheraton Chicago, finishing up a talk at the annual Cubs convention, a rowdy town hall where fans cajole and encourage the owners. The Cubs haven't won a World Series since 1908 and haven't even been there since 1945, but in the nearly six years since the Ricketts family bought the team, they have invested and rebuilt, and this year the Cubs have their best chance in a long time. "I'm envious of your hat!" Ricketts tells Acheatel.

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"My hat!" the woman says in a thick Chicago accent. "Really, what you have done to this team, I am so excited." Ricketts thanks her before turning to a woman who's presenting a book on Wrigley Field to be signed. "This is a 40-year Cubs fan!" Ricketts shouts in the general direction of her fiancée, Brooke Skinner, a brand strategist at Twitter. "Can we get a pen?"

Ricketts—in a knee-length leather skirt, boots, and blue blouse—could pass for a politician. And in fact, a few minutes later, when Todd and I duck into a meeting room beneath the hotel kitchen, he tells me that Laura, as a kid, "wanted to be president—she even put on a tie." She instead grew up to work behind the scenes, like the rest of her family. Her father, Joe Ricketts, is the billionaire founder of TD Ameritrade, and Joe and Todd run the huge GOP super-PAC Ending Spending. Her third brother, Pete, is the very conservative governor of Nebraska, who opposes gay marriage. Laura is the outlier Ricketts: a liberal lesbian activist who was one of Barack Obama's top LGBT bundlers and is the chair of LPAC, which aims to organize lesbian donors into a power bloc.

Laura soon disentangles herself, and we head upstairs to a hotel suite to talk. It's 10:30 a.m., and she kids me: "Bud Light? They're our beer vendor, so I have to offer you one." Ricketts adopts voices for comedic effect: gruff for her dad, boisterous for a gay friend. Now it's *faux* announcer: "Would you like a Bud Light? Absolut?"

She settles on the couch. "It's true," Ricketts says when reminded of her childhood ambitions. "When I was 5, I wore a tie and I wanted to change my name to Larry, which probably tipped my parents off that I was gay." Today, she says, she can't imagine running for office. "I don't really like politics, to be honest," she says. "But it's other people making decisions about my life, and my country, and my child's education ... I wish we didn't have so much money in politics, but that's not the world we live in. If we don't play here, we forfeit. And I'm not willing to forfeit my rights."

Laura was an all-star softball player in the years after Title IX, the only daughter in a house full of boys. "We had a very male-dominated household," she says. "Now I'm in baseball and politics, and I think it helped me feel really comfortable." They weren't rich, but in 1975, her father co-founded First Omaha Securities, one of the first discount brokerage firms, and built a fortune. "I would not say my dad doesn't have an ego. He's big. He thinks big, he dreams big," she says. Yet she draws a distinction between his political approach and hers with LPAC: "It's not your father's super-PAC—specifically, it's not *my* father's super-PAC," she says, "in the

sense that a couple of people are giving a lot of money. This is really more a movement ... you can give \$5 and I'll give \$5,000, but we'll get a thousand of you to give \$5, and we're all speaking with the same voice."

LAURA RICKETTS says she wasn't out to herself, let alone her family, for a long time. "I wasn't gay! I just kept falling in love with my best friend, that's all," she says, laughing. Only when she returned to Chicago after law school did she figure it out. She sat her parents down the day after Thanksgiving and delivered a statement she'd rehearsed. "I just said, 'There's something going on with me, it's been going on for a long time. I've tried to deny it, I've tried to ignore it, but it's just who I am.'" She was in her early 30s.

"It was quite a dramatic time," recalls Joe Ricketts, who broke his custom of declining interviews to talk about his daughter. "I had known many people who have been gay, and their lives were tormented—I'm 73, it was a different generation—but the thing that I didn't want to have happen was for my daughter to be tormented." (He sums up his views as "Heterosexuals and homosexuals should be treated equally under the law, given the same opportunity and respect. I don't believe that you can change the definition of marriage.") "I said she was born that way, a child of God. I told her to keep her head high and demand respect."

Laura picks up the story: "You're a leader," she says her father told her. "And you can help other young women to come out. You gay people don't know how to market your cause. You need to do micromarketing—you need to get on the ball!" And then, she says, "He said, 'You always be proud of who you are. Because I am.'" She pauses for a moment, chokes up. "And then he said, 'If anybody ever gives you trouble you tell me.'" She apologizes, dabs her eyes. "I said,

What does her family think of her Obama support? "I don't think they like it!" Ricketts says, laughing. "They don't!"

'Because you're going to beat them up?' He was like, 'Oh, no. I would hire somebody to take care of it.'"

She became politically active when George W. Bush proposed a constitutional ban on same-sex marriage in his 2004 State of the Union speech. She soon got involved with Lambda Legal, where she realized how few women were at the LGBT events she was attending. When a group began to pursue marriage equality in Illinois in 2012, she helped launch the campaign—and turned to her dad and Todd for help. "I'm hesitant to say much, because it's his business, but I asked my dad to be supportive, and he stepped up," she says. (He confirms that he wrote a check.) James Bennett, Lambda Legal's Midwest regional director, says that "in Illinois, it arguably wouldn't have happened without her." She also became a major bundler for Obama and co-chaired the DNC's LGBT leadership council.

What does her family think of her Obama support? "I don't think they like it!" Ricketts says, laughing. "They don't! Todd and I joke that for some candidates we should just not get involved, because we offset our contributions. He had a fund-raiser for Mitch McConnell, and I was like, *Ugh—you know I have to do something for Alison Lundergan Grimes now.*" Her brother Pete explains that there are things they can talk about: "A lot of Laura's and my conversations about politics are tactical conversations, aspects of fund-raising and things like that." As Todd tells it, their mother had a rule: "You can fight in the house, but when you go out in public, you remember you're a family."

They've followed that rule, but it hasn't always been easy. In 2012, the New York Times revealed "the Ricketts plan," a proposal by GOP strategist Fred Davis for Joe's super-PAC to spend \$10 million tying Obama to Jeremiah Wright and calling him a "metrosexual, black Abe Lincoln." It was bad for the family—the siblings had been negotiating for public funding to renovate Wrigley Field, the Chicago *Sun-Times* reported that Rahm Emanuel was "livid," and the deal fell apart. Laura today says, "It was an opportunity for the Obama campaign, and it was used. We all know how those things go."

It's a common question put to Ricketts, how she gets along with her family. It's also one that strikes her as a little bit stupid. "I don't think we're unlike any other family. It's just that we have the capacity to organize and contribute in ways that other people maybe don't," she says. "I just say [to people], do you agree with everything your brother thinks? No. Was your family all about marriage equality when you came out? No. So?" ■



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Sex Lives: Maureen O'Connor

Immediate Intervention
Why would anyone
go to couples therapy
after three dates?

BRENDAN AND CATE HAD BEEN TOGETHER just over a year when, at 23 and 21, they began to feel trapped. They shared an apartment in Fort Greene, which neither could afford alone, and a motorcycle that they kept on the porch. Minor disagreements had been spiraling into misery-inducing fights, but neither had been in a serious relationship before—much less a serious breakup. So when Cate proposed weekly sessions with a marriage counselor, Brendan agreed. The insurance co-pay was \$30, cheaper than most dates. And so, pretty quickly into a relationship that began before both parties could legally drink, the pair became regulars at couples therapy.

Couples counseling has come a long way since “Can This Marriage Be Saved?,” the *Ladies’ Home Journal* column that introduced it to the American mainstream in 1953 by featuring case studies from a marriage-counseling clinic run by a divorce-phobic eugenicist named Paul Popenoe (who had no formal training but did



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believe strongly in the breeding power of the “better type” of Americans). These days, when therapy in general often functions as a short-term tool for specific problems and notions of romantic commitment are increasingly bipolar—pseudo-marriage growing while real marriage happens later and less often—premarital counseling is increasingly popular in the lead-up to a wedding, and so is counseling that starts before marriage is on the table. I know a 20-something couple who started therapy before graduating from college (and ended up in grad school intact). I know a 30-something couple who never discussed marriage directly until they were on a therapist’s couch (and who realized their goals were incompatible and broke up). The actress Kristen Bell started couples therapy “right away” after meeting now-husband Dax Shepard. In a joint interview with *Good Housekeeping*, Shepard characterized it as a preventive measure: “In my previous relationship, we went to couples therapy at the end, and that’s often too late.” And sometimes, couples counseling begins because neither party wants to admit when marriage is explicitly off the table. I recently met a pair of 24-year-olds who had been dating on and off since their tweens. To learn how to let go, they went to therapy together.

To some, this may sound ridiculous—self-centered young people talking about themselves incessantly, playacting at adulthood without accepting responsibilities. Why waste time fixing a flawed relationship when there’s plenty of time to find someone new? Several skeptics I spoke to characterized the practice as a wimply millennial pursuit—wanting a grown-up to hold your hand while you make a leap, wanting to check off all the boxes to prove you’ve done everything you could instead of taking ownership of your life. (At my middle school, “conflict resolution” was an activity you could sign up for at the counselor’s office.)

“If you need couples therapy before you’re married—when it’s supposed to be fun and easy, before the pressures of children, family, and combined financials—then it’s the wrong relationship,” my friend Stephanie says. “Been there, done that.” (Some names, including Stephanie’s, have been changed.) When a three-year relationship crumbled right when she was expecting to get engaged, Stephanie embarked on nine months of couples therapy at her boyfriend Evan’s request. But therapy actually made her feel more alienated: “I think he viewed therapy as an argument to win, making the case for ‘his side.’ But you can’t have opposite sides if you’re going to make a relationship work. You’re supposed to be a team.” Therapy functioned like a nine-month-long breakup.

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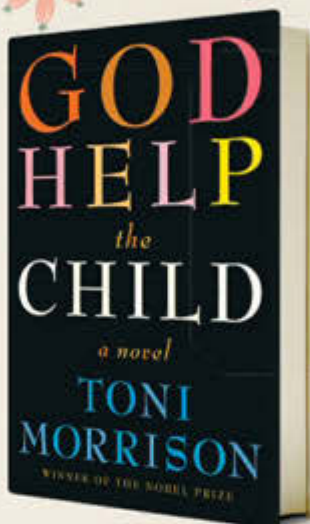
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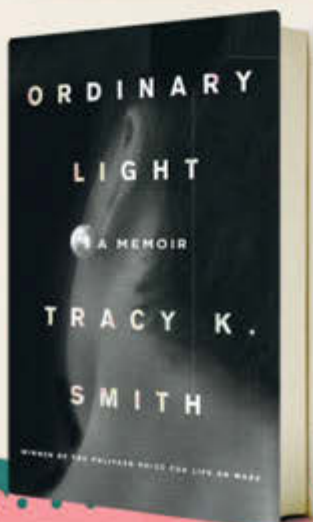
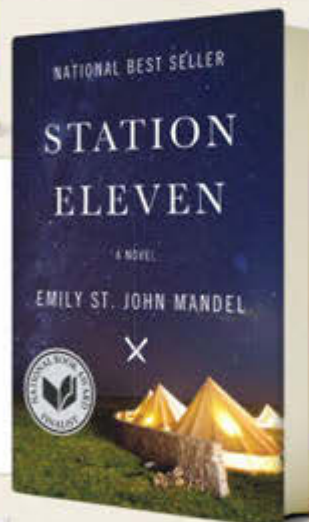


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Eventually, though, they agreed to end it—and nine months later she met the man she would eventually marry. She has never gone to therapy with her husband.

Of course, as Dax Shepard would argue, by the time Stephanie entered couples therapy, it was probably too late—incongruous expectations had already undermined their relationship. At his midtown therapy practice, psychologist Craig Kafko has seen couples who have been together only two or three months. “In this city, there’s a lot of pressure on both women and men to get relationships going,” he says. “They go on one or two dates, and in individual therapy they’re already talking about what their life would be like with that person. When they come in, they’re making sure the foundation is there.”

Kafko, who is 36, proposed therapy before he proposed marriage to now-wife Michal, a nursery-school teacher. “Initially, I was put off,” Michal says. “I felt defensive, as if something was wrong. I took a few weeks to warm up to the idea. I tried to view it as a new experience. Plus, I was humoring Craig.” He was studying for his doctorate at the time, and the pair had just moved into a studio apartment together. Michal, an only child, wasn’t used to sharing space. Craig, a chatty extrovert, wanted her to share more of her thoughts: “I’m a therapist, what did you expect?”

“Getting into a relationship is like putting Miracle-Gro on your character defects, because everything is going to come out,” says Laura Young, a Manhattan therapist who estimates that 70 percent of the couples she treats are unmarried. “All your insecurities, all of your flaws. And the question is, can you tolerate it? And can you tolerate this person’s defects? And can you help each other to work on them in a loving way?” This struck me as very wise and also very unfair. Why should I be responsible for fixing my boyfriends’ problems? Because, Young explains, if you’re living as a couple, then you’re living with each other’s prob-

“Getting into a relationship is like putting Miracle-Gro on your character defects.”

lems, each reflecting off the other. “Bottom line, we didn’t get these character defects by ourselves. We get them from relations with others. And we get our strengths from them, too.” What is her most important advice? “The most basic in communication is how to argue effectively and not disconnect,” she says. Several other couples I spoke to cited “how to fight” as the most valuable lesson of therapy—when one couple realized nighttime fights had triggered a cycle of sleeplessness and crankiness, they resolved to save relationship talks for daylight hours. “The ground rule is not to threaten to leave during a fight,” Young says. “If they want to discuss leaving, they can do it when they’re not fighting. It’s a weapon with a short shelf life.”

But isn’t there a value to storming out sometimes? When I look back at the relationships I had in my 20s, my only regret is that I didn’t end them sooner. If a relationship isn’t built to last, isn’t it better to cut your losses as quickly as you can? Stephanie’s nine-month breakup was one-quarter the length of the entire relationship. If she’d refused therapy, she could have had multiple rebound relationships in the time she spent miserably analyzing the failed one.

“I think sometimes people come and one person wants out and they’ll use therapy to help them make the break,” admits Rachel Sussman, a therapist who specializes in couples and family. This struck me, initially, as a sign of cowardice. Imagine being so afraid to admit that a relationship failed—or so afraid to make an ex-boyfriend-to-be cry—that you’d pay hundreds of dollars to get a professional to do it for you. And then I realized that if there were some sort of “get out of jail free” card for breakups, I would pay almost any amount of money to acquire it.

Still, I couldn’t find a single therapist who says he or she would help initiate a breakup in a session with clients. (Perhaps this is for the best. If we outsource our breakups, what will we write love songs about? Too much closure would mean destroying the great artistic resource of “the one who got away.”) But if therapists aren’t willing to dump someone for me, could they at least tell me whether a new date is working? Like Kafka, Young has treated couples who have been together as few as two months, but she’s never seen a couple who haven’t yet decided whether they even want to be a couple. “I’d be loath to say it’s ever too early for therapy,” she muses. “I’d go back to what they need and what they think they need. I mean, if they’ve only been on one date and want to do therapy?” She pauses to consider her own hypothetical question. “I’d want to know what happened on that date.” ■



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NEW MUSEUM

How the Whitney might just solve the impossible problem of contemporary art.

By **JERRY SALTZ**

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Curatorial staff and art handlers placing artwork on the sixth floor for the new Whitney's inaugural exhibition, "America Is Hard to See."

THE MUSEUM AS FAIRY TALE

I'VE SPENT MUCH OF MY LIFE IN and in love with museums. When I was 10 years old, there was no mention of art in my home. But then my mother began driving me from the suburbs to the Art Institute of Chicago. There, she looked at art on her own for hours, leaving me to do the same. At the time, I liked being alone but hated museums. I felt they were old and dead, places where people just stood and stared. But one day, waiting, bored, brooding, I found myself absorbed by two beautifully colored adjacent old paintings. On the left, a pair of men standing outside a jail cell talk to a haloed man, inside the cell, while an incredible leopard guards nearby. After a long time, I looked at the right-hand panel, where the setting was the same but the time was different. In place of the leopard, there is a man returning a huge bloody sword to its sheath; the haloed man inside the cell stoops down, both hands on the sill to support his body, extending his neck, which has been severed, through the bars. His head is on the ground, on a platter, as blood spurts all over. I looked back and forth; left, then right. Then something gigantic hit me. These images were telling a story. The paintings were from the 15th century, just when Renaissance painters were beginning to understand perspective. And yet they were not dead, they were alive, at least when I looked at them. Two paintings from the 1450s, still working their magic on me. Amazed, I looked around the gallery and saw gates open. I thought each work was the same—a voice, yearning or in pain or proud, but speaking to me, in visual tongues, down through history. Maybe everything in this suddenly amazing building was telling a story, I thought, a story I could discern just by looking (and without going to school). I wanted to spend forever in this cacophony, this living catacomb. A few months later, my mother committed suicide. I didn't return to a museum until I was in my 20s.

By then—in the 1970s, with no art in my background, just inchoate need—I had gathered together an idea of what a museum was supposed to be. That is, a place where old art is stored, preserved, and celebrated (sometimes only dutifully). I also knew that museums could be problematic, that they made imperious judgments, that they excluded whole vital populations. Of course they did: Museums were invented as royal showrooms, triumphal demonstrations of the power of some very brutal states (Napoleon's France, colonialist Britain) to gather up the cultural patrimony of the wider world. When museums first truly came to the United States, it was part of an American effort to claim a seat at the table of Western civilization by brandishing collections of antiquities and masterpieces (the Met, our first world-class institution, was meant to be encyclopedic like its cousins the Louvre and the British Museum). Later, with MoMA especially, the museum itself would become an arm of aggressive cultural diplomacy, promoting Abstract Expressionism as a campaign of the Cold War. So I knew early on that museums were not fairy-tale places—that the practice of enclosing and curating a history of art within marble walls enclosed prejudice and even bloodlust, too. But I also knew that those buildings enclosed touchstones, benchmarks, cultural skeleton keys, divinations, extraordinary probings of the human imagination, and masterpieces like that St. John the Baptist cycle by Giovanni di Paolo that had floored me in Chicago. I knew, in fact, that they contained something ecstatic and represented something eternal.

Maybe it's naïve and romantic, but, beyond the testimonies of robber barons, princely privilege, enforcement of accepted taste,

colonialism, and worse, I do still see the museum's Platonic ideal: a communal effort, conducted over centuries, to preserve, interpret, and commune with artistic ancestors, archetypes, traditions, genres, and methods. Sumerian kings collected antiquities (one scholar interprets a second-millennium-B.C. tablet as “a museum label”). Collecting and display surfaced in China 3,500 years ago. The Greeks created a *pinakothekē* in the fifth century B.C. to honor the gods. Museums have been with us as long as memory has been with us—“quiet cars,” in the words of New York Times critic Holland Cotter, places where looking is a way of knowing the world and ourselves. And where the past is always alive, sometimes even more vividly than the contemporary moment, the two coalescing into the out-of-body grace of eternal presentness.

PART II:

BRAVE NEW WORLD

BUT MUSEUMS HAVE CHANGED—a lot. Slowly over the past quarter-century, then quickly in the past decade. These changes have been complicated, piecemeal, and sometimes contradictory, with different museums embracing them in different ways. But the transformation is visible everywhere. Put simply, it is this: The museum used to be a storehouse for the art of the past, the display of supposed masterpieces, the insightful exploration of the present in the context of the long or compressed histories that preceded it. Now—especially as embodied by the Tate Modern, Guggenheim Bilbao, and our beloved MoMA—the museum is a revved-up showcase of the new, the now, the next, an always-activated market of events and experiences, many of which lack any reason to exist other than to occupy the museum industry—an industry that critic Matthew Collings has called “bloated and foolish, corporatist, ghastly and death-ridden.”

The list of fun-house attractions is long. At MoMA, we've had overhyped, badly done shows of Björk and Tim Burton, the *Rain Room* selfie trap, and the daylong spectacle of Tilda Swinton sleeping in a glass case. This summer in London you can ride Carsten Höller's building-high slides at the Hayward Gallery—there, the fun house is literal. Elsewhere, it is a little more “adult”: In 2011, L.A.'s MoCA staged Marina Abramovic's *Survival MoCA Dinner*, a piece of megakitsch that included naked women with skeletons atop them on dinner tables where attendees ate. In 2012, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art paid \$70,000 for a 21-foot-tall, 340-ton boulder by artist Michael Heizer and installed it over a cement trench in front of the museum, paying \$10 million for what is essentially a photo op. Last year, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago mounted a tepid David Bowie show, which nevertheless broke records for attendance and sales of catalogues, “limited-edition prints,” and T-shirts. Among the many unfocused recent spectacles at the Guggenheim were Cai Guo-Qiang's nine cars suspended in the rotunda with lights shooting out of them. The irony of these massively expensive endeavors is that the works and shows are supposedly “radical” and “interdisciplinary,” but the experiences they generate are closer, really, to a visit to Graceland—“Shut up, take a selfie, keep moving.”

In this way, an old museum model has been replaced by another one. Museums that were roughly bookish, slow, a bit hoity-toity, not risk-averse but careful, oddly other, and devoted to reflection, connoisseurship, cultivation, and preservation (mostly of the past but also of new great works)—these museums have transformed

into institutions that feel faster, indifferent to existing collections, and at all times intensely in pursuit of new work, new crowds, and new money. We used to look at these places as something like embodiments and explorations of the canon—or canons, since some (MoMA's and Guggenheim's modernism collections) were narrower and more specialized than others (the Met's, the Louvre's). But whatever long-view curating and collecting museums do now—and many of them still do it well—the institutions that are sucking up the most energy are the ones that have made themselves into platforms for spectacle, as though the party-driven global-art-fair feeding frenzy had taken up residence in one place, and one building, permanently. Plus, accessibility has become everything. More museums are making collections available online—sad to say, art is sometimes better viewed there than in the flesh, thanks to so much bad museum architecture and so little actual space to display permanent collections. Acoustiguide guides have become more and more common, and while there's much good they can do, it often seems their most important function is crowd control—moving visitors through quickly to make room for the next million.

The museums of New York can already feel alien with this new model taking over. And we're really at the beginning rather than the end of the transformation. All four of Manhattan's big museums—the Met, MoMA, the Whitney, and the Guggenheim—have undertaken or are involved in massive expansion, renovation, and rebuilding. These are more than just infrastructure updates: We are witnessing a four-way competition for supremacy in the new art-museum universe, where the Whitney is moving downtown, near the heart of the gallery district. The stately Met has taken over the Whitney's old Madison Avenue Breuer building, making use of the new space not for its unrivaled permanent collection of 50 centuries of art but for contemporary work—to reimagine itself, for the first time in its 145-year history, as a serious contender for the postwar-and-contemporary-art crown (an ambition complemented nicely by the ascent of its Costume Institute, whose galleries are now named to honor *Vogue* editor-in-chief Anna Wintour). MoMA bungled one renovation in this direction in 2004, producing inadequate galleries for the permanent collection but ample party space; a decade on, it's doubling down, building an even worse edifice oriented around event spaces it calls “the gray box” and “the art bay.” And the Guggenheim's crazed obsession with making more Guggenheims continues with a behemoth Frank Gehry in Abu Dhabi, presumably to be finished before sea levels rise to swamp it.

What makes this all so startling is that these museums have never been all-out competitors before. Until now, they had distinct missions, collections, and curatorial identities: The Met specialized in 5,000 years of art; the Whitney was about American art; MoMA was modernism's Francophile Garden of Eden; and the Guggenheim—well, the Guggenheim has always been a bit confused, mostly distinguished by its incredible building. But now, all of a sudden and for the first time, it is not unusual for curators to speak of being unable to do shows because “that artist is already taken.”



Robert Gober's 'Untitled' (1991) being installed at the new Whitney (the cones and warning sign are to protect the artwork, not a part of it).

Each of these museums still preserves, collects, and exhibits the art of the past. But with the action and big money centered on contemporary art, galleries, auctions, art fairs, and biennials, each is more committed than ever before to the art of the now and the cult of the new. I love the new. I am a member of that cult, in part because the art world has become my surrogate family of gypsies and dreamers (yes, I'm a mush). But that cult, and the ascendance of spectacle, may be the end of museums as we know them and has been the subject of countless conversations I've had over the past year with curators, artists, gallerists, and collectors, all of whom acknowledge a major shift under way. “The problem is museums trying to be as up-to-date with contemporary art as galleries are,” says painter and critic Peter Plagens. “The cultural distance between what a museum preserves (Cézanne, Joan Mitchell, etc.) and how it spotlights the present (Björk, interactive art, etc.) is greater than ever.” As former Venice- and Whitney-biennial curator Francesco Bonami puts it, “They're like those in the fashion world who only follow the last collection and are content to have their shows look like those of other museums.” Plagens says that a few years ago, ex-L.A. MoCA director and impresario Jeffrey Deitch told him that “museums

needed young audiences and that what young audiences wanted to see is events, whether the events are fashion shows, rock concerts, or exhibition openings.” And now? “I mean, fucking James Franco is everywhere,” Plagens says. “Miley Cyrus is on art-world tongues, curators are courtiers, museums are the runway.” Of course, he acknowledges, “museums will survive. But in what form?”

PART III:

THE WHITNEY REBORN

THE NEW WHITNEY, opening May 1 and designed by Renzo Piano, is the first totally new museum to be unveiled—an angular, asymmetrical, ship-shaped building at the base of the High Line, deep in tourist country and adjacent to the heart of the art-market beast, the bluest-chip gallery district in the world, Chelsea. The move marks the first time one of the four major Manhattan museums has abandoned its flagship for another neighborhood since 1966, when the Whitney moved into the Breuer Building (it moved in 1954 to West 54th Street from its original West Village brownstone). The move downtown is itself significant, returning the museum to its roots in a place of bohemian tribal identity, even if the downtown it’s returning to has been built by developers for the very rich, and the move itself will help make the area tonier still than the Upper East Side. For what it’s worth, the museum looks directly down on the pier where *Titanic* survivors disembarked (the ship itself would have docked five piers north).

The audacity of the building shows that, yes, the Whitney will survive the new era. But the better question is whether it has found a way to thrive in it. And, believe it or not, I am in love with what this building represents—and with its perfectly titled inaugural show, “America Is Hard to See.” The show includes 600 works by around 400 artists, drawn entirely from the museum’s collection of over 21,000 works by 3,000 artists, and it makes me think this museum might just point to one way through the current morass.

Why? Let’s start with the building. I don’t care what it looks like. It’s “likable enough,” but my only concern as an art lover is with the inside of museums. Were I to judge the new Whitney exterior, I’d say it looks like a hospital or a pharmaceutical company. (Our architecture critic, Justin Davidson, gives his opinion of the new Whitney on page 40.) But, for me, the genericism of the building suggests that what matters to the Whitney isn’t vanity, grandeur, showboating, celebrity, or destination architecture—it’s what goes on under its auspices.

So what is inside? First, space. By today’s bombastic standards, the new Whitney is modest. The place could become overcrowded overnight. Yet there’s lots and lots more space than the museum has ever had before, and more of it will be devoted to showcasing the permanent collection, which is crucial. Until now, the Whitney had only meager galleries for its permanent collection, about 7,725 square feet of the museum’s approximately 32,000 total square feet of exhibition space. The fifth-floor galleries were converted offices and never suited for this collection. When the Whitney moved into the Breuer, it had 2,000 works in its collection and, in 1970, a staff of 105; now it has a collection of 21,000 and, when it opens, a staff

COMING-OUT PARTY

Eight especially exciting works from the new Whitney’s first show, drawn from its permanent collection, that have not been seen in public since at least 2000.



CHARLES WHITE
Wanted Poster Series No. 4, 1969



MALCOLM BAILEY
Untitled, 1969



CHIURA OBATA
Evening Glow of Yosemite Fall, 1930



DOROTHEA ROCKBURNE
Drawing Which Makes Itself, ca. 1973

of 300. (This place had to move.) The Piano building has about 50,000 square feet of indoor exhibition space (plus 13,000 outside), of which 20,500 over two floors is devoted to the permanent collection. (There is even more space to claim on an adjacent lot currently occupied by a rare remaining meat-processing facility, which you get the sense the Whitney is already eyeing lustily.) There, the space is open, simple, Shaker-like; the wide-plank pine floors are perfect. This means the Whitney spent \$422 million in part to do something that the other three big Manhattan museums haven’t done: make a lot more and a lot better space for older art and also make a lot more better space for newer art. What an elegant solution: Why should a museum of this stature have to choose? And yet others have.

Second, a team of curators with the wisdom to not go craven on contemporary mania—to make use of new energy without pandering or prostrating themselves. These days, the museum and its staff are the objects of much affection and admiration in the art world—and while goodwill might seem like an intangible quality for which to praise a museum, it does reflect something, namely that artists have faith in these people and this institution (which is instrumental). And it shows that the Whitney has learned from past mistakes, which is a relief, given that the Whitney’s road here has been rocky at best—including decades of fizzled or highfalutin plans to expand its uptown building; getting branded overly p.c. in the early 1990s (when it was actually often spot-on); running afoul of the art world in the early aughts with a corporate mind-set and dubious shows; the departure of two of its directors in less than six years. In each of these moments, the problem was the museum trying to change too radically. Things were so bad in 2003 that, had the museum hired a less capable director, I believe the Whitney might have been lost.

In fact, much of the guarded optimism around the new building has to do with the museum’s director, Adam Weinberg, and his *modus operandi*. Dressing like a disheveled professor, with unkempt curly hair, Weinberg, 60, is scruffier than his director brethren, generous, quick to give credit, eager, affable, earnest, an old-school true believer in art and artists, and never imperious or autocratic. Like other top-tier museum directors, he goes to Venice and Documenta. But when I’ve seen him there, it’s in the weeks after the opening, when the crowds and money have moved on. Often I find him looking at art alone, map in hand, scribbling notes, eating pocketed hotel sandwiches on the run. He can be spotted doing the same in galleries with his daughters and no sandwiches.

But Weinberg and his team—most notably, chief curator and deputy director Donna De Salvo, and curator and associate director Scott Rothkopf—are also operating under unusual terms, thanks to the unusual mission of the museum, which is the third reason the Whitney seems so well suited to the new era. As De Salvo said, “The Whitney is not a building. It’s an idea.” The idea is actually a question, and the question is “What is American art?”

That mission is a real key. Since it is an evolving question governing an evolving collection, the mission liberates the museum from many of the obligations that burden its competitors, in particular historicization and periodization. The result is much more flexibility, in both what the museum chooses to collect and how it integrates



Willem de Kooning's 'Woman and Bicycle' (1952-53) during installation.

the new work into shows alongside the old. The Met, even as it expands into contemporary art, retains a straightforward standard of world-historical excellence and a very traditional tendency to categorize work in terms of its era and origin. MoMA remains committed, in principle, to its postwar project of canonizing each successive, telescoping iteration of the avant-garde—a problematic mission now that the term has lost so much meaning and new movements evolve in a far weirder, more idiosyncratic and personal, less linear fashion than they used to. When the art history of this era is written, it will not be with a lot of isms.

The Whitney hardly knows how to curate with isms. It was founded in 1930 to collect, explore, explain, and interrogate American art, and has always had a fluid sense of its own mission, one that can shift with changing times (this is its fourth location!) and allow the institution to dedicate itself always to living, working artists. (In fact, the first three Whitney curators were artists.) But its curators have also brilliantly reimagined their mission for our new crazy era—an era defined not just by commerce but also by globalization and encyclopedic knowledge, an art world full of people who can access every iota of art history online but who know it less as a narrowly defined art-historical teleology than as a messy bunch of almost ahistorical source material.

The Whitney knows how to consider new work alongside old, how to throw together pieces produced

in entirely different contexts and watch the sparks fly. Freed from the need to consign works forever to, say, a room (or collection) dedicated to Ashcan School painting or Pop, curators could hang a single painting in multiple shows over decades alongside different paintings from different decades each time, and each time prompt a different reckoning—in one case with the use of color, in another the use of line, then gesture, compositional strategies, relation to madness or Romanticism or urban experience, to music, materiality, process, to television or cinema or Continental philosophy. The list will be as long as the curators are creative.

The first show demonstrates the advantages quite powerfully. More than a quarter of the works on display have not been seen in decades, and many have never been shown before at all. The effect is to recast ideas about American art history by bringing new work into the fold without surrendering the tradition to people born since 1975—to treat those artists and their work as part of a running conversation, and one that is designed to be constantly reevaluated. Over and over, artists whose work I thought I knew looked brand-new and suddenly relevant; second-stringers step forcefully to the fore as more prescient and pertinent than they've ever seemed. It's thrilling, for example, to behold, in the gallery of vaunted Abstract Expressionist masterpieces like de Kooning's

Door to the River—maybe the best work in terms of sheer originality in the museum right now—and Rothko's tremendous painting *Four Darks in Red* emanating like a Buddhist television set, Hedda Sterne's electric *New York, N.Y., 1955* with spray paint looking absolutely of the present. Miraculously, Alfonso Ossorio's scratched and splattered canvas more than holds its own against Jackson Pollock. Revelations like this are more than the exception—and they are one very vital way to leverage the fresh energy of contemporary art into new insights about the past without entirely handing over the keys to the museum to the galleries down Tenth Avenue.

Thankfully, the museum is already endowed with a permanent collection perfectly suited to this project, which is the fourth reason I think the Whitney is in such good shape. Everyone pooh-poohs the Whitney's holdings, but I think that the collection is not only singular but also that we've never really seen it before, and probably the most heartening thing about this first show is how eager the curators seem to be to bring those works, hidden for so long, into conversation with new ones. See Allan D'Arcangelo's *Madonna and Child*, an empty-faced image evoking Jackie Kennedy, and Malcolm Bailey's hand-painted 1969 depiction of a slave ship take their places in a wall of Pop masterpieces by Warhol, Johns, and others. Encountering Alma Thomas's brightly colored part-by-part painting *Mars Dust* (1972) in the Whit-



HUGO GELLERT
The Fifth Column, 1943



SOL LEWITT
Wall Structure, 1965



ABRAHAM JACOBS
The Patriots, 1937



MAYA DEREN
At Land, 1944

ney at the same time that one of her works hangs in the Obama White House only makes you realize how much optical DNA still lies buried in this supposedly lesser collection. And while MoMA rightfully gives Cézanne pride of place in beginning its story, here pride of place goes to side-by-side paintings by Marsden Hartley. With these two works, we're instantly communing with the striving, desperation, will, and individuality of American artists up against almost insurmountable aesthetic odds. In these two paintings, we see an artist synthesizing Cubism with German Expressionism but adding mystic, visionary American twists. One abstract composition's brooding blacks, paradeliike reds, banners, squares, and crosses are all veiled symbols of Hartley's lover, a German officer killed in World War I. I've referred to Hopper as the Whitney's Picasso, but this show shifts that mantle to Hartley. I love that. The striking, large 1932 painting of boat parts by I. Rice Pereira gives us almost Guston-like levels of gaga gnarliness. And the salon-style wall depicting America in convulsion in the 1930s will stop you in your tracks. One floor down, in addition to a 1935 painting by Alice Neel of coal and steel strikes, there's Harry Sternberg's 1935 satanic lithograph, *Southern Holiday*. It portrays the hell on Earth suffered by 23-year-old Claude Neal. He was accused of raping a white woman in Florida; his lynching had been advertised in newspapers. Vigilantes kidnapped him from jail, tied him to a post, cut off his fingers and toes, castrated him, and forced him to eat his penis. His broken body was then dragged behind a car and delivered to the home of the alleged victim. America *is* "Hard to See."

This kind of show—this kind of museum-shaping—would have been impossible in the Breuer, and the Whitney has built itself an environment much more suited to it than those the other museums have managed to. In part, this is because the Whitney has had the brilliant instinct to make the setting, not the building, the spectacle, which is the next reason for optimism. On my first visit, I walked in and out of the building, onto roof decks and terraces, up and down outdoor steel staircases, through galleries, stopping to marvel at firsts-for-the-Whitney: a works-on-paper study center, a theater, classrooms, not to mention infinitely better restoration facilities with the best views and space in the building. My heart started beating faster as it occurred to me that these outdoor and indoor spaces might actually be integrated—and that the exterior space won't just be forlorn "sculpture courts" for boring geometric sculptures. If solo and group shows integrate these spaces, this redoubles the possibilities of the whole. The free lobby gallery is a dream, not just an afterthought or ghetto, and could become an engine of artistic exposure. The light inside the building is extraordinary, and the views so panoramic that they become living Saul Steinberg cartoons of New York looking to America and the world. They might be selfie traps, but I love them. Most important, all of this seems like it has been built for art and artists—which is the last reason for my optimism, and probably the one that feels most like wishful thinking.

PART IV:

HOW DID WE GET HERE, AND WHERE DO WE GO NEXT?

HOW DID THE MUSEUM go from being a contemplative quiet car to the very center of a commercial frenzy, one that required an especially incisive group of curators endowed with an especially appropriate curatorial mission to be navigated responsibly? In America, one "corporatist" figure looms large as seer and bogeyman. As recently as 1990, the art world looked askance at then-Guggenheim director Thomas Krens when he began prowling the moneyed precincts of art fairs and biennials with celebrities, clients, and marketers, moving fast,

doing deals, playing loose, looking for funds, all in plain view. Back then, museum directors didn't do such things—at least not so blatantly and gleefully. Soon, he'd sold off works by Kandinsky, Chagall, and Modigliani to raise money to buy newer art from the collection of an Italian count. In 1998, BMW underwrote Krens's blockbuster "The Art of the Motorcycle." Krens dismissed criticism as "a nonstory," flatly asking and answering, "Who do you get to support an institution? People who have relationships with it." As he tried to open a Guggenheim Brazil, his museum presented "Brazil: Body & Soul." As China became an economic powerhouse, the Gugg presented "China: 5,000 Years." These shows were sprawling, incoherent messes. Somewhere in there was a Deutsche Guggenheim in Berlin, a Soho Guggenheim, and even a Guggenheim Las Vegas located in the Venetian Resort Hotel Casino. I think there's actually a Guggenheim Helsinki in the offing. Whatever; Krens famously said that future successful museums should have "great collections, great architecture ... two shopping opportunities, two eating opportunities, a high-tech interface via the internet, and economies of scale via a global network." Many now do.

At the time, Krens was seen as an outlaw. Yet it turns out he was really a prophet, the first to see that museums, far from a shelter from the tawdry bustle of commerce and fashion, could traffic in it. Might have to, in fact, if they wanted to retain the attention of the global wealthy who would become their patrons. "They're treading on thin ice," the collector, writer, and gallerist Adam Lindemann warns. "In this money and popularity frenzy, new art drowns out the old. I'm not a romantic but the good ole days are gone for good."

Believe it or not, you can actually pinpoint the year that the rest of the museum world caught on to this vision. The dam broke in 2000. Museums had staged crowd-pleasing architectural spectacles before—the Centre Pompidou and Musée d'Orsay in Paris, the Louvre defacing itself with a glitzy glass pyramid, Berlin's immense Hamburger Bahnhof, and Krens's own great-for-tourism, bad-for-any-artist-except-Richard Serra Guggenheim Bilbao. But the new era of gigantism mushroomed in the enormous, state-funded, 370,000-square-foot Tate Modern in London, complete with a new footbridge across the Thames to the museum. (Imagine the cultural message of New York building a bridge across a river to get to a museum—another mammoth Tate is now under construction on the Thames.) When it opened, British artist Jake Chapman clairvoyantly observed that the new Tate was about popularizing art: "The Tate's like an all-welcoming, beneficent parent. It only says yes. They don't present art as implicitly resistant, but as pleasant." Legendary curator Clarissa Dalrymple concurred: "Tate Modern is a giant palpitating termite queen: It must be fed in order to produce."

What it needed to be fed was not art, not even crowds, but money, especially in an age of dwindling public funding for the arts and incredible competitive pressure for the attention of the very rich. The truth was, the whole art world had changed before our eyes—and while many understood early that the multipronged rise of biennial culture, art auctions, and art fairs meant a major shift, many fewer saw just what that would mean for museums, which had always seemed like bulwarks against consumerism and tulip mania. This year, there have been a string of stories about museums selling off masterpieces to fund new buildings and new acquisitions and cover bills. The most high profile was the news in February that MoMA would be selling an 1887 Monet at auction to "benefit the acquisitions fund." But a smaller item pained me more. Last month, the Westphalian State Museum in Germany announced that it is considering the sale of its St. John the Baptist panels by Giovanni di Paolo. Inevitably, these works will go to private collectors and out of public view forever.

So now the big question: Is this all bad? For starters, it isn't entirely new. Jasper Johns sold three paintings to MoMA from his



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first 1958 Leo Castelli solo; Frank Stella sold work to MoMA before his first Castelli show. Matthew Barney had a museum show less than 60 days after his New York solo debut. Despite worries about money corrupting art, money, museums, and contemporary art have been bedfellows since at least the advent of modernism. And despite persistent fretting about mixing high and low, art and pop culture have canoodled forever.

The main problem with the new era is that everything has started to look the same, with everyone curating the same way. Those Carsten Höller slides have also made appearances at Tate Modern, as well as in Berlin, New York, and Milan. I recall thinking I saw the same Shirin Neshat video installation in three shows in three cities in two weeks. It's like a curator virus that destroys the bone marrow that produces originality. Busy curator-bees now fly from show to show, participate in one another's panels, write texts for each other's catalogues, advise clients, organize exhibitions at art fairs and auction houses, teach at international art academies, judge prestigious awards where they give money to one another's pet artists, review one another's shows in art magazines (!), and curate like crazy. They scout at art fairs, like collectors; one look at Instagram confirms that many of these folks travel constantly. No wonder a lot of their shows look the same, like they were thought up in hotel lobbies, written on the backs of envelopes, and emailed to assistants. In an extraordinary confirmation of this nightmare of insularity, Julia Halperin reports in this month's *Art Newspaper* that "nearly one-third of major solo exhibitions held in U.S. museums between 2007 and 2013 featured artists represented by just five galleries" (Gagosian, Pace, David Zwirner, Hauser & Wirth, and Marian Goodman). This look-alike monoculture gets worse. At L.A. MoCA, the figure is 40 percent; at MoMA, it's 45 percent; at the Guggenheim, it's more than 90 percent. As Bonami observes, "Museums' wanting the same art lets them be fools among fools. If everyone's an idiot, then nobody's an idiot any longer."

Yet no one thinks that museums should stop showing current work. The new is a foyer to the past, reinventing, changing it—a mist one looks through, is refreshed and vexed by. To deny the new is as "death-ridden" as to obsess over it. So how much can these other museums learn from the Whitney's example? It's not a perfect template, and, to be sure, the Whitney is bound to mess some of this up, too. But there are a few lessons: Make enough space to show your permanent collections, and make them work with and for new acquisitions (and vice versa); concentrate on quality and original thinking, not quantity and entertainment; most of all, never forget that the reputations of museums are built on the backs of artists. If art is not the center of an institution, it turns out the institution cannot hold. As for the particularities of the Whitney mission, well, the Met just unveiled details of its first show in the Breuer building—"Unfinished," which will place old and new together, from Renaissance masters to the present, Titian to Luc Tuymans. This announcement came nearly a full year in advance, and just happened to be made right before the new Whitney opened. They must have been feeling competitive, though they had the right idea.

"Museums will find the right balance between the historical and the contemporary," Anne Pasternak, the forward-looking director of Creative Time, reassures me. And those that don't—they may just spawn new institutions, too. It's happened before, with spectacular results. MoMA was born in 1929 of the Met ignoring modern art. The following year, the Whitney was organized in response to the Met and MoMA shunning American art. When these two institutions began shying from "provocative decisions" in the 1970s, visionaries like Alanna Heiss created what has become PS1, and Marcia Tucker left the Whitney and founded the New Museum. That's how explosive museums being unresponsive can be. But maybe, just maybe, the new Whitney is being explosive enough, and showing us the way. ■

THE NEW BUILDING IS OPEN

It's filled with light.
And contradictions.

By JUSTIN DAVIDSON

I'VE BEEN WATCHING Renzo Piano's new Whitney Museum of American Art take shape for two years, waiting for its jumble of forms and facets to make sense. The fences are gone and the steel skin's been shined, but it remains a complicated contraption, ungainly on all sides. From West Street, where immense stacked gallery windows stare over the traffic, it resembles a double-decker tour bus waiting to turn. The Washington Street side bristles with fire-escape-like staircases. The building is slotted between High Line and highway like a piece of advanced hardware on a megamotherboard. Once it ages a bit, it will start evoking our Apple moment, when high-tech containers, from phones to cruise ships, had to have satiny metal casings and dark, silky screens. There's nothing seamless about this awkward kit of protruding parts and tilting surfaces, though: The thing might have arrived in an Ikea flat pack and then been prodigiously misassembled.

To understand why an architect known for refined museums would produce such a deliberately clunky building, it helps to start on the eighth floor, where Charles Demuth's 1927 painting *My Egypt* holds pride of place. Demuth turned a grain elevator into a cathedral, scored by angling rays of sunshine, and Piano, too, has built an apparatus that manages light and aspires to monumentality. Demuth aestheticized the industrial machine; Piano has built a machine for the aesthetic-industrial complex.

The Whitney decided to bust out of the Upper East Side in part because the administrators and board craved a powerful new exhibition tool. They got what they wanted: something big, wired, and tough, with galleries that convert from unbroken floors to intimate vestibules—the last word in versatility. Artists can string sculptures up from the ceiling, gouge the recycled-pine floors, and dazzle drivers below. The \$422 million building is engineered to

The Whitney,
seen from
11th Avenue.



PIANO'S NEW BUILDING MISTAKES VIRTUE FOR PERSONALITY.

absorb punishment, move crowds, and adapt to whatever insanity future creators can dream up. A concrete spine (containing elevators and stairs) joins two volumes, their work spaces and galleries squared up as if to point out that art, even old art, is always a work-in-progress. The public will mostly see the downtown half's exhibition spaces; the uptown side is where conservators, curators, and administrators will all work so close to the art that they can refresh themselves with a peek at a Rothko anytime.

There's a reason that museums all over the country keep turning to Piano: He knows what he's doing. I toured the building with director Adam Weinberg and chief curator Donna De Salvo, and their pleasure in the possibilities was palpable. In the galleries, light doesn't have just a single source or flavor; it streams in through windows, ricochets off neighboring buildings, sneaks around temporary walls, and gets focused by ceiling-mounted spots. In the Breuer building, Mark di Suvero's *Hankchampion*, a straining, muscular barn-beast made of salvaged wood, sat grimly rooted to the stone floor. In the new Whitney, it practically hovers above the shadow it casts on the pale planks. Even a detail as subliminal as the reveal, the thin strip of airspace between the wall and the floor that most visitors will never notice, had its size calibrated and recalibrated to suit a particular Carl Andre copper sculpture that creeps along the floor. American art has never looked so good—especially on the fifth floor, an 18,000-square-foot open space with vast windows at either end. From time to time, this ultimate art receptacle will be left open as an unencumbered plain, one where scrim block the sun on a schedule managed by computer.

Even when they're divided up by temporary partitions, the galleries are like landscapes: You don't only see what's in front of you but also catch tantalizing glimpses two rooms away. Turn a corner, and you come to an unexpected bower, like the bay where Jay DeFeo's *The Rose*, a Lee Bontecou void, and Louise Nevelson's *Dawn's Wedding Chapel II* combine into a mini-essay on powerful female artists whose work bursts off a wall. You hardly need a new temple for that, but the newfound flexibility gives license to experiment.

Yet even as he lavishes attention on the visitor's experience, Piano seems to be wondering whether intense communion with art is still enough to keep the public engaged.

Maybe a perpetually distracted audience demands even more distractions. Majestic windows and broad terraces beckon visitors to step outside for a view of the museum's native turf. Flâneurs promenade on the High Line below; the Cubist cityscape poses in the foreground, and in the distance the World Trade Center gleams. "When you have a museum experience, you need to intersperse it with rest," he told me, and indeed he's composed a symphony full of rests. The new Whitney is a wonderful place for people who get easily bored by art.

That pair of dueling thought bubbles—*come see how much art we have; you hardly need to look at it*—is one of several loudly mixed messages that make the museum so disappointing. Marcel Breuer's old Whitney was (is) a rude, charming beast, leaning brawnlily over Madison Avenue as if challenging us to call it ugly. Piano's new Whitney is so sensitive to its location and earnest mission, so generous in its supply of views, light, and convenience, that it mistakes virtue for personality.

Memories of the museum's wonderful old home clank around the new one, the way family history can haunt a newborn. Although he has echoed details like the lobby gallery and the giant elevator, Piano has in some ways designed an anti-Breuer; one that retreats rather than widening as it rises. Whereas Breuer doled out windows, keeping the artistic experience sequestered, Piano interweaves interior and exterior into a building that aspires to be lovingly urban. He could hardly have asked for a more promising spot in which to flirt with the city: One side faces rooftops and water towers, the other the open sunset. The architect pulls up and peels back his building to make it as friendly as he can. Since Gansevoort Street is narrow, Piano widens it into what Italians call a *largo*. He pushes the façade back from the curb, using the extra sidewalk space for a heated café, separating public and private space with the most minimal of membranes. He's co-opted the street for a front yard.

The intermingling of collection and city is not superficial. It's a statement that art is inseparable from its *terroir*. An eighth-floor gallery conveys the early 20th century's excitement about Manhattan's magnetism. There, a panel recounts the excitement of the French artist Francis Picabia when he visited in 1913. "You of New York should be quick to understand me and my fellow painters," he told a reporter. "New York is the Cubist, the Futurist city. It expresses in

its architecture, its life, its spirit, the modern thought."

When Piano and Richard Rogers designed the Centre Pompidou in Paris in the 1970s, they turned circulation into spectacle by placing the elevators and escalators in see-through tubes on the façade. At the Whitney, Piano has rediscovered what he calls architecture's fourth dimension, the "poetry of movement." A window above each elevator offers a view of the whirring mechanism. Exterior stairways provide a vertical counterpoint to the horizontal parade of the High Line. "Standing on one of the terraces, you watch people pass in and out and through the building," Piano says. "That makes it a social place. You have a relationship not just with the art and the city but with other visitors too, like in those opera houses where you're positioned to look at other audience members."

The Whitney's new neighborhood is also, more or less, where its story begins. Edward Hopper painted *Early Sunday Morning*, his portrait of sleepy brick storefronts on Seventh Avenue, just a few blocks from here in 1930. The Whitney—newly opened near Washington Square, to incubate creativity among the bohemians—bought it a few months later. The new building offers a panoramic version of an audio guide. *Made right here!*, these terraces proclaim. And in fact this locavore approach works beautifully for small regional institutions like, say, the Parrish Art Museum on Long Island. But the Whitney fled uptown in 1954 and returns as a vast and complex institution with innumerable intertwined traditions. Does it need pointing out that New York art isn't only from below 14th Street, and American art isn't only from New York? In fact, as the inaugural exhibition makes clear, American art can be made by people who come here from all over the world.

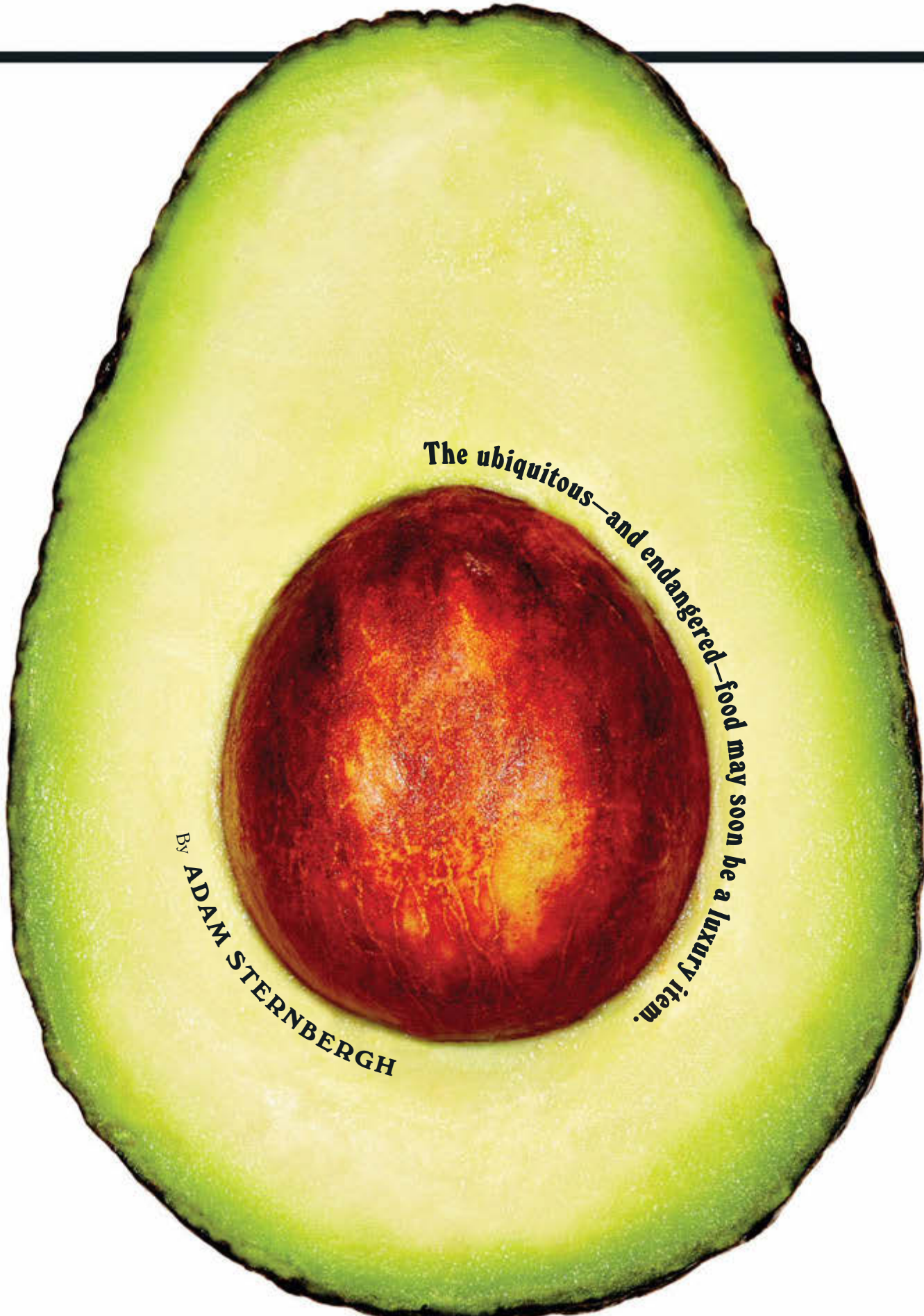
Does seeing *Early Sunday Morning* here mean more than seeing it on Madison Avenue? Maybe. But museums exist to beam us from the actual world into the imagination. The Met's medieval rooms don't need a cathedral town just outside to work their magic. By opening the Whitney to the city, Piano makes American art seem more tribal. For all the building's flexibility, he has baked in a curatorial strategy that De Salvo and her successors can modify only by deploying a yellowing set of shades. Piano has provided both distraction and its antidote—a museum in conflict with itself. ■

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The ubiquitous—and endangered—food may soon be a luxury item.

BY ADAM STERNBERGH

Do you love avocados? I mean, really love them? Because as much as you might think you love avocados—and maybe you are one of the people in this world who run pro-avocado Tumblrs;

who have avocado tattoos; who write articles like “11 Avocado Struggles Only Avocado Lovers Will Truly Understand” with sentences like “It’s not an ingredient. It’s a lifestyle”—you probably don’t love avocados as much as the people of Fallbrook, California. An inland town of roughly 30,000 that’s a half-hour drive north of San Diego, Fallbrook is unofficially known as “the Avocado Capital of the World.” More than 80 percent of the avocados grown in the U.S. come from California, and a third of the avocados grown in California come from within 20 miles of Fallbrook. Every April, the town plays host to the Fallbrook Avocado Festival, a one-day event that draws between 70,000 and 100,000 visitors. The festival features a guacamole contest, with amateur and professional divisions, and an “Art of the Avocado” show, featuring avocado-themed objets d’art, with separate categories for 2-D art (i.e., paintings) and 3-D art (i.e., papier-mâché avocados). For the children, there’s the Avo 500, in which avocados, outfitted with tiny wheels, are raced down an inclined track. There’s the Little Miss and Little Mister Avocado Festival competition, in which kids are dressed up, pageant style, and the Best Decorated Avocado Contest, in which avocados are dressed up, pageant style. If there’s anything fun or entertaining or exciting to be done with an avocado in public, Fallbrook has thought of it and done it.

Charley Wolk is 78 years old and has lived in Fallbrook for more than 40 years, ever since he was stationed by the Marines at nearby Fort Pendleton. When he bought his first house for his family, he discovered that the property came with an avocado orchard and thought, *Now what the hell am I going to do with that?* He studied up on avocado farming and eventually became an avocado-grove manager; he’s since served as the chairman of the California Avocado Commission, and now runs a blog called Growing Avocados, on which he’s billed as “California’s foremost avocado expert.” Back in the late ‘90s, when California was selling about 500 million pounds of avocados a year across the country, the U.S. opened its borders to Mexican-avocado imports post-NAFTA, and many California

farmers panicked. They worried that this influx of imports would kill the domestic market. Wolk foresaw a different future. He told his colleagues: “You have to get your heads wrapped around a billion pounds of avocados in the U.S.” And he was right. “We did it,” Wolk says now. “We sold a billion pounds.” Mexican imports made it possible for East Coasters to get avocados year-round, not just during the California season, which lasts roughly from March to September. The avocado went from a grocery-aisle curiosity to a nationwide pantry staple. This—along with a nationally rising Hispanic population, a dogged and well-financed avocado-industry campaign, and a general American awakening to the glory of guacamole—led to an avocado boom that we are still in the midst of today. In 1999, Americans consumed 1.1 pounds per capita; by 2014, we consumed 5.8 pounds each.

Global demand for avocados has never been higher. Interest has never been more fervent. There’s only one thing that troubles Wolk: water. When I first met him back in late February, he’d just returned from the monthly meeting of the California Avocado Commission, held in San Diego. On the agenda: short- and long-term strategy. The short-term-strategy meetings were straightforward: how to deal with skyrocketing demand. The long-term-strategy meetings, he explained, were mostly concerned with what to do about the drought.

California’s dry spell has lasted three years and now, barring some last-minute climatological miracle, will extend to a punishing fourth. Early in April, California governor Jerry Brown announced mandatory cutbacks on water usage, a first in the state’s history. The cutbacks exempted agricultural use, which accounts for 80 percent of California’s human water consumption—an exemption due in part to the fact that the agricultural sector already has a system of restrictions and allotments in place. In California, farmers pay dearly for water—or, more precisely, they pay for the delivery of water—and water is getting very, very expensive. “The avocado’s native environment is tropical,” Wolk says to me in his office, which overlooks

his own modest avocado grove, “and we’re growing them in a desert.” It takes 72 gallons of water to grow a pound of avocados, compared to, for instance, nine gallons to grow a pound of tomatoes. What’s more troubling is that “the issue with water used to be cost,” Wolk says. “Now it’s availability.” Ken Melban, the director of issues management for the California Avocado Commission, doesn’t see imminent trouble, “but a year from now, if we don’t have significant rain or snowfall, we’ll have to revisit that. Maybe sooner. All bets are off if this continues and continues. We’re living in anxious times here in California.” The problem is hardly limited to his area of expertise—“Ninety-eight percent of California is in a drought condition,” as Melban points out, “so the ramifications are much broader than whether someone can get an avocado in New York City”—but still, if you want to think through what climate change might mean for your daily life, the fate of the avocado is a good way to start.

AVOCADOS ARE HAVING a moment, in the way that, in the ascendant, hashtag-friendly foodie culture of the early-21st century, certain food items can, like pop stars or catchphrases or hem lengths or hairstyles, have a moment. The avocado has emerged unexpectedly as the J. K. Simmons of the fruit basket: admiringly versatile, long underappreciated, suddenly celebrated, and unexpectedly on the verge of being priced way out of your budget. This is a strange and surprising twist in the long history of the avocado, which is itself a strange and surprising fruit.

Surprise No. 1: It’s a fruit.

Technically, it’s a berry. Yet unlike any other berry you can think of, it’s not sweet or inviting to eat while still on the branch. The name avocado comes from the Aztec word *ahuacatl*, which means “testicle,” so named because avocados typically grow in pairs and hang heavy on the tree. Spanish conquistadors came to call them *aguacate*, a name that was further bastardized by English speakers (a young George Washington wrote in 1751 of the popularity of “agovago pears” in Barbados); once exported back to Spain, they became known as *abogado*, a word that meant “advocate” or “lawyer.” The avocado fruit became a staple in Central and South America but didn’t land in California until the 1850s, when an avocado tree was imported from Nicaragua by a private citizen as a botanical curiosity.

From the beginning, branding was an issue. In English-speaking North America, avocados were known by the less-than-enticing name “alligator pears.” A 1927 statement from the California Avocado Growers’ Exchange laments: “That the avocado, an exalted member of the laurel family, should be called an alligator pear is beyond all understanding.” A subsequent campaign by horticulturalists and growers championed the name avocado, yet still, the fruit remained a tough sell for Americans. Avocados are inedible on the tree and take several days to ripen after being picked, so bins of hard, green, underripe avocados often befuddled shoppers at the grocery. And once eaten, the

fruit has a flavor that’s hard to pin down. The question “How does an avocado taste?” posted to Yahoo Answers elicits “smooth, buttery” and “best taste in the world” but also “evil unpleasant odor” and “soft, uncooked squash or something”—reactions that are a testament, perhaps, to the persistent confusion as to exactly how, and when, they should be eaten.

The avocado pit, meanwhile, is a large, bitter, and slightly toxic choking hazard; ground-up avocado seed was once used in a South American folk recipe for rat poison. The avocado’s evolutionary heyday was way back in the Cenozoic Era, when the mighty megafauna—ground sloths and mammoths and so-called gompothers—roamed the wilds of North America. The giant mammals that were able to swallow the fruit whole, then shit the massive seed out elsewhere—the system by which most fruit propagates—went extinct about 13,000 years ago. Avocados only persisted thanks to mismatched evolutionary partners like rodents, which are so-called pulp thieves: animals that would hoard avocados to eat the pulp later, inadvertently dropping the discarded pit elsewhere. (From an evolutionary standpoint, humans are the ultimate pulp thieves.)

Yet somehow here we are, in New York City, roughly 13,000 years later, putting avocados on everything in sight: sliding them into sandwiches and slicing them over salads; frying them; searing them; serving them on sushi (the Japanese did

not invent this; think of the name California roll); pestling them theatrically into ever-more-complex variants of guacamole; or lovingly spreading our own homemade mashed lawyer-testicles on toast, then sprinkling it with pepper flakes and curry oil, hashtagging it #avocadoobsession, and posting a photo of the whole thing on Instagram. If you’re Tom Brady, the New England Patriots quarterback, you eat avocado ice cream whipped up under the guidance of your personal trainer, Alex. If you’re everyone else, you eat avocados—over 100 million pounds’ worth, at last estimate—in the form of guacamole, on Super Bowl Sunday, while watching Tom Brady. Avocado

toast alone has become a robust subgenre of the overall craze, inspiring not only articles like “Five Must-Try Avocado Toasts at Hot New York Restaurants” but also articles like “Avocado Toast: The Most Annoying Food on Instagram.”

This sudden popularity, in part, is because the avocado, which once looked to our eye like a reptilian egg, is aesthetically well suited to the Instagram age—especially when smeared on something else, such as toast or Kim Kardashian’s face (as it has been, as a beauty aid). Avocados have also come to magically embody a number of contradictory qualities that are especially appealing right now. They’re an indulgence that’s still a superfood. They’re a fruit that’s full of fat. (But the good kind of fat!) Avocados can represent a particularly New York-ish, in-the-know exclusivity (*Check out this photo of the avo-toast I ate this morning at the Butcher’s Daughter, which in case you didn’t know is way better than Cafe Gitane’s*), but they can also represent a particularly all-American, of-the-people inclusivity (*Check out this photo of my seven-layer guacamole!!!*). From such humble origins, the avocado has achieved a cultural cachet that goes far beyond its



“Once it hits Chipotle, people think, ‘Wow, we better do something about this climate-change thing.’”

consumption. When Chipotle announced, in 2014, that the threat of rising avocado prices owing to projected avocado scarcity might cause the company to abandon guacamole temporarily (the chain goes through 97,000 pounds of avocados a day), the internet loosed a collective, strangled cry of avocado-tinged despair, the likes of which has not, as yet, greeted the drought-fueled advent of the \$20 jar of organic-almond butter now found at your local health-food store.

JANUARY THROUGH April is, traditionally, the wet season in California, and during a two-hour drive south from Los Angeles to Fallbrook in February, the hills looked reassuringly verdant—green enough, at least, to remind you of what exactly much of Southern California is: a natural desert irrigated by man into a sense of artificial lushness. Talk of the drought, however, hovered like an ambient anxiety, lurking just under every conversation. Billboards on the highway pleaded with drivers

to Save Our Water, while radio ads listed water-saving tips. A public-radio station, hosting a pledge drive, hyped a documentary called *Look Up!*, which details the ways in which the drought and climate change and “chemtrails” are all by-products of secret government experiments on the environment.

In Charley Wolk’s office, he shows me a report from the local water board; on the front page is a photo of a man attempting to measure the snowpack in the Sierra Mountains. All around the man: patches of ground with no snow. Normally, at this time of year, there would be 10 or 12 feet of snow, which, in spring, turns to much-needed water. Wolk tosses the report back on his desk and grimaced. “Back in ’91—well, they called it the March Miracle,” he says. “The growers were told we were going to get cut back 30 percent. With avocado trees, we can do what you call stumping”—a process, he explains, by which you basically cut off all the branches of a tree and let it live for one season without water. The next year, if you resume watering, new branches, and fruit, will grow. But stumping’s only a stopgap solution. If you stump 30 percent of your grove for one year, and the rationing continues to the next season, you have to stump a different 30 percent, and so on—until eventually you run out of grove to stump. In 1991, many California farmers stumped their trees, then got an unexpected reprieve. “March came and flooded everything,” Wolk says. “The quantity problem went away. It not only rained down here but it snowed in the Sierras—there was water all over the place.”

This March, however, there was no miracle. Instead, there was a report released by a group of Stanford scientists titled “Anthropogenic Warming Has Increased Drought Risk in California.” The study’s lead author argues that human factors have led to a climatological situation in the state that “will result in more

frequent occurrences of high temperatures and low precipitation that will lead to increased severe drought conditions.” The report points out that there were 14 drought years in the 98 years between 1896 and 1994, and there have been six drought years in the 19 years between 1995 and 2014. According to the National Drought Mitigation Center at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, currently, 44 percent of California is classified as being in “exceptional drought,” the worst classification. “What hits home the most for me,” says Brian Fuchs, a climatologist at the center, “is that California has missed out on a full year’s worth of precipitation over each of the last three years. So that means going into this fourth year, even if you get normal precipitation, or even if you get 150 percent of normal, you still have this deficit that’s accumulated. That doesn’t go away with one, two, three, four precipitation events.”

Last year was also the warmest year in California’s recorded history. The trouble with exceptionally warm weather is that it exacerbates not only the drought but the effects of the drought. You use more water, even as you have less of it. For a while, for farmers, this simply meant that water prices kept rising. When Wolk started farming avocados four decades ago, water cost about \$72 per acre-foot of water (roughly 326,000 gallons). Now in some areas it costs about \$1,500 per acre-foot. I ask Wolk about the potential of desalination, the process by which seawater could be converted to freshwater and used for agriculture. He wasn’t optimistic. “The price I heard on that is \$2,600 an acre-foot. I just don’t see how you can make that work.”

California is not our only source of avocados. In fact, imports, primarily from Mexico and Chile, now make up 85 percent of the avocados consumed in the U.S. year-round. But those countries have avocado issues of their own. In 1990, Chile had fewer than 8,000 acres of avocado trees; now it has more than 60,000 acres, and large avocado growers are draining the country’s groundwater and rivers faster than they can replenish themselves. In Mexico, where avocado farms are so lucrative that avocados are referred to as *oro verde*, or “green gold,” the problems are even more troubling. Seventy-two percent of the avocado plantations in Mexico are located in the state of Michoacán, and much of the industry there is controlled or influenced by the Caballeros Templarios drug cartel. The extent of the money laundering, extortion, and murder around avocados in Michoacán led one writer to equate avocados to Africa’s blood diamonds, while others have adopted the phrase “blood guacamole,” which might sour the mood around the chips at your next Super Bowl party.

WHEN CHIPOTLE MADE its dire public announcement about abandoning guacamole, the anxiety it produced felt discomfitingly familiar. After all, it is the latest in a long line of fears about climate-fueled scarcity: a possible coffee crisis in Africa and Central America, a possible chocolate crisis in West Africa, an actual climate-and-drug-cartel-fueled lime crisis in Mexico last year, and the ongoing quinoa crisis in Bolivia. These recurring scares speak in part to an alarming new global agricultural outlook, and in part to our collective redefinition of “crisis” to mean an inability to get any exotic food easily and affordably

"It used to be a cheap ingredient. Now it's more expensive, but you can charge for it."

from any far-flung corner of the Earth. (All at the cost of carbon emissions—for example, the shortest trip for coffee beans to the U.S. is about 1,000 miles.) Who can blame us? It's what we're accustomed to. Fifteen years ago, many of us had never heard of quinoa, and struggled to pronounce it. Now it's a staple of the modern urban diet—and, as a result, it's become so popular and expensive that the people who farm it can no longer afford to eat it.

If the most dire climate predictions for California prove prescient—those that foresee, for example, a 30-, 40-, even a 100-year drought—the avocado is not the agricultural product most likely to disappear from the state. (That would be dairy, which is water-intensive and not geographically dependent.) It's not the food most likely to be permanently priced out of your diet. (That would be almonds—99 percent of which come from California, and the wholesale price of which has more than tripled since 2001.) But if you draw a Venn diagram with "West Coast drought-affected agriculture" in one circle and "East Coast foodie-fueled manias" in the other, smack-dab in the ovoid intersection of these circles would sit the avocado. And so, having only just recently become a tattoo-worthy symbol of foodie obsessiveness, the avocado could become the symbol of a pre-climate-change era, when we could reasonably expect anything, from anywhere, at any time, to appear on our dinner plate. "Once it hits Chipotle, people think, *Wow, we better do something about this climate-change thing*," says Eric Holthaus, a climatologist who writes for Slate. "You can see all these satellite photos of melting Arctic ice, and read reports about changes in the jet stream, but when it starts hitting Chipotle, that's when people pay attention."

Wolk's bio on his blog explains that "Charley has helped growers through fires, freezes, droughts, heat waves, pests, water restrictions and quarantines ... he's seen it all and done it all." I asked him whether he's started advising his clients to think of the current drought not as a temporary setback that has to be outlasted but as a new normal to be reckoned with. "It's right at the edge of that," he said. "But getting past that point psychologically is very difficult. People don't want to face the problem." As he points out, he still gets dozen of inquiries from people who want to move to California and farm avocados, inspired by a newfound love of the fruit and news of a boom so lucrative that investment-fund managers started buying up avocado groves.

The avocado farmers already in California are searching for new, more efficient ways to grow avocados, and looking to develop new, heartier, more drought-resistant strains of avocado to grow. Eventually, avocados may simply become too expensive to grow profitably, in which case farmers will be forced to switch to something else, like grapes. Either way, you, the end user, are increasingly unlikely to find avocados sliced up as a freebie giveaway at a restaurant, next to the omelet.

A 2014 study from the University of Arizona predicted a 28 percent increase in avocado prices as a result of the drought—an increase owed in part to the fact that, as the study's author explains, "people are the least price-sensitive when it comes to

those items, and they're more willing to pay what it takes to get them." Travis Swikard, a San Diego-raised former surfer and the head chef at Boulud Sud, remembers picking avocados off the tree as a kid in his grandmother's backyard. Now the avocado, as an ingredient, can be proudly featured at a restaurant like Boulud Sud. "It used to be a cheap ingredient," Swikard says. "Now it's more expensive, but you can charge for it. Because people want it." Avocados won't disappear; they'll just become a luxury item. And the alligator pear will complete its unlikely journey from evolutionary afterthought to Instagram starlet to culinary status symbol.

LET ME HAVE a dozen squabs and a large capon,' said a man yesterday to his poultryman in Washington Market. 'London is buying our securities, and stocks are booming again ... Asparagus will be the most popular vegetable in the market through the present week.' This is an excerpt from an article headlined "Asparagus Has a Big Boom!," which appeared in the *New York Times* on May 12, 1895. The economy was rosy. The future looked bright. So everyone was indulging in asparagus, the exotic delicacy of the day. In a different era, they may have run out and gotten asparagus tattoos. Since Adam bit into the apple, food has always been about more than sustenance; it's an outward emblem of our moral, economic—and now global and climatological—well-being.

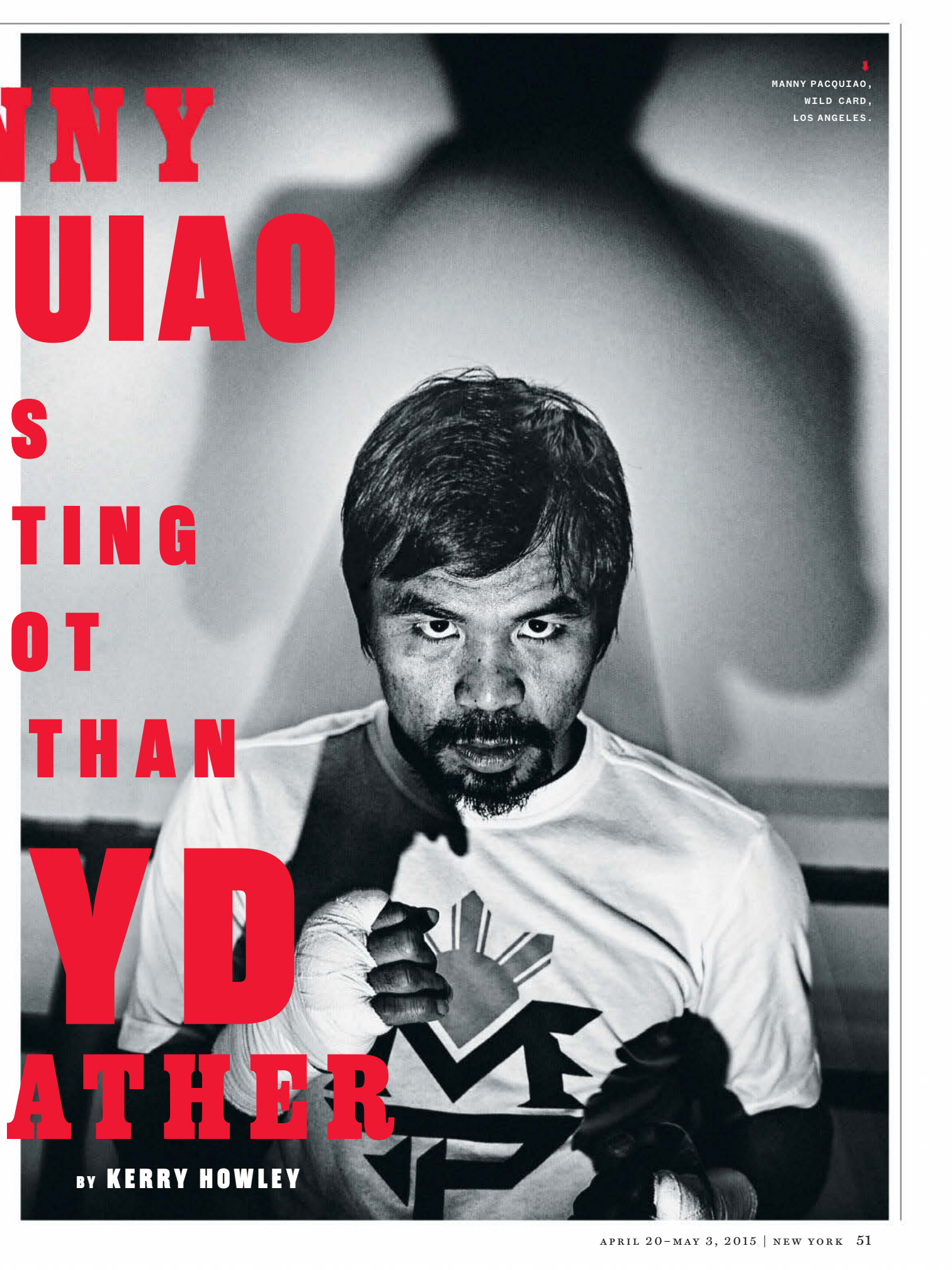
As for avocados, back in 1895, the article reports: "A fruit ... made its appearance last week in the fancy fruit stores. It is the alligator, or Avocado, pear, very highly esteemed by some persons." One hundred and twenty years later, Nicholas Morgenstern, proprietor of Morgenstern's Finest Ice Cream parlor and the upscale coffee shop El Rey, stands over a plate of avocado-ice-cream toast that he's been serving lately in his restaurant, and wonders if the avocado bubble has finally popped. He eyes his creation warily. (The toast, it should be said, is delicious, once you get past the fact that you're eating ice cream for breakfast.) "Somewhere in the back of my mind I'm hoping it will kill the avocado-toast craze. Because it will have jumped the shark." He pauses, then adds: "I think." As for the future of avocados, he says, "It's not even that complicated. The prices will get out of control."

Morgenstern has seen this happen before—for example, with pine nuts. He once served a signature salt-and-pepper pine-nut cookie, but when pine-nut prices went way up, he tried to swap in peanuts instead. But people didn't want peanuts. They wanted pine nuts. So he embraced the obvious solution: "We're going to serve the pine-nut cookie and raise the price." And people bought the cookie. He sees a similar future for avocados. "As long as people want it, they'll figure out how to grow it, and then people will just want it more," he says. "You'll go to the supermarket and an avocado is, like, six bucks. And you'll say, 'Yeah, I've got to have that thing.'"

**MAN
PACQU
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FIGHT
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MORE
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MAYWE**

**FLOYD MAYWEATHER,
MAYWEATHER
BOXING CLUB,
LAS VEGAS.**

PHOTOGRAPHS BY BEN LOWY



MANNY PACQUIAO S TING OT THAN YD ATHER

MANNY PACQUIAO,
WILD CARD,
LOS ANGELES.

BY KERRY HOWLEY

WE LIKE
EMMANUEL
PACQUIAO
BECAUSE
HE IS
SMALL.

We admire him because he will tuck his head and duck inside the dangerous space made by a much larger man, where he will punch upward, like a deranged songbird pecking away at a cat. We like Manny because this situation reminds us of his childhood, wherein a backwoods Filipino boy, so poor he sometimes survived on a single meal a day, stole away for the city, where he punched other children for pennies. We like him because now, when he goes back home, he receives long lines of his hungry countrymen like a generous king. He pays their bills. He builds them hospitals.

Japanese fans can tell you about the time the boxer's lout of a father ate Manny's dog. Mexican admirers can tell you about the time when, too slim for a fight, Manny made weight by putting rocks in his pockets. On the streets of Manila, fans recognize not just the boxer but the men necessary to the boxer, such as his fast-talking, Parkinson's-afflicted trainer, Freddie Roach, who can draw a thousand people to a mall. In a documentary about Pacquiao released earlier this year, we watch the boxer slam his fist into various faces in slow motion, while a deadly serious Liam Neeson explains that he is doing it *all for us*. Adds the British journalist Gareth Davies: "It's almost as if you feel the light of God behind him."

Pacquiao is the most famous resident of an entire Pacific nation, which, in the midst of his fights, experiences a drop in the crime rate and an unofficial truce in the war-torn south. When tropical storm Sendong hit Mindanao in 2011, attention turned to "the single biggest one-man charity institution in the country," in the words of the Philippine *Daily Inquirer*: How much would he give? He has been elected twice to his country's congress, is widely expected to run for president when he retires, and when he competes on May 2, he will be watched by 107 million Filipinos.

Boxing is a sport that tends toward Manichaean clarity (think Evander Holyfield versus the man who would bite off his ear), and the upcoming fight provides a suitably menacing double: Floyd Mayweather, a hermetic megalomaniac nicknamed "Money" and fond of selfies involving stacks of it, a man who spent two months in jail for punching his ex-girlfriend in the head, who demanded that his Filipino opposition "make me a sushi roll." Money Mayweather is also the undefeated fighter slightly favored by oddsmakers, which means he fails to elicit even the sympathy that redounds to an underdog.

The Man With the Light of God Behind Him is not known for sound financial management—he is being investigated by the Filipino and American tax authorities for many millions in alleged unpaid taxes—but this fight will pay for a lot of bad decisions. The pot, an estimated \$200 million, will make next month's fight at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas the "richest ever single occasion in sport," as the *Guardian* put it, with the cheapest seats selling for \$1,500.

It's a price set, in part, by years of anticipation and the dysfunction of the sport itself. For half a decade, Pacquiao and Mayweather, the best boxers in the world, have failed to face one another because they could not come to an agreement about the terms, or perhaps because neither ever really wanted to come to one. Days before the fight was finally announced, sportswriters were still claiming that only credulous fools could believe it would happen. It was late 2009 when HBO Sports president Ross Greenburg pointed out that a Pacquiao-Mayweather matchup would showcase "the two best pound-for-pound fighters in the world, both in their prime, in the same weight class." It was 2010 when Snoop Dogg publicly begged Pacquiao to "get in the motherfucking ring." It was 2011 when Nelson Mandela's daughter tried to arrange the bout for her father's 93rd birthday. In the interim, Pacquiao won his second congressional race and lost two boxing matches that seemed to signal the end of his best years. Repeatedly, a bout with Mayweather seemed imminent, only to collapse for reasons that were themselves the subject of dispute. Today, Pacquiao is 36 and Mayweather is 38. Both men have slowed, faded, but no one seems to care. It is simply the biggest fight in decades.

ON A THURSDAY AFTERNOON in March, Pacquiao, his 50-man entourage, and I fill a one-room Thai place adjacent to Hollywood's Wild Card gym, the same joint he hits every day after training. Pacquiao is actively ignoring a plate of chicken and broccoli placed in front of him by his manager, Mike Koncz. In a couple of months, Pacquiao will be taking punches from a 147-pound man, and because he is, now, nowhere near 147 pounds, it is important to Koncz, a 50-something Canadian who has somehow earned Pacquiao's trust, that the boxer assimilate the chicken and broccoli. Koncz unwraps Pacquiao's napkin and polishes the fork and spoon therein. He instructs me not to ask Pacquiao a single question for the next 20 minutes. He positions the silverware beside the plate, and hopes.

But Pacquiao already has his Bible out. It is well worn and dense with pink highlighting. "Watch out that no one deceives you," he says to a man sitting beside him. He is lecturing excitedly in Tagalog, a language he speaks with an accent educated Filipinos read as lower class. I ask Koncz about the man being lectured. "Some guy he met at Bible study," says Koncz, sighing.

Pacquiao has a mop of black hair, a broad nose, and a wide mouth that shifts between the professional, public-ready grin and a warm smile. "Ahhhhhhhhhhh," he says, in the exaggerated way of a teacher mimicking epiphany.

Koncz asks me to push the plate of chicken and broccoli closer to Pacquiao. I give it a nudge. Koncz, evidently unhappy with my nudge, reaches past me to nudge it further. Pacquiao does not notice. Now he is shouting across the room to another table full of men in his entourage. "God made man," he shouts, "in his image!"

Sportswriters talk constantly of "focus," "dedication," and "single-mindedness." It is a measure of this cliché's persistence that, despite the mountains of evidence to the contrary, men still use these words to describe Manny Pacquiao. This is a boxer who sidelines as a working politician and a low-budget-movie star, a man who leads Bible study on Sundays and moonlights as one of the shortest professional basketball players in the Philippines. He



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has recorded two platinum albums, and a hit single called “Sometimes When We Touch,” which Pacquiao admirers delicately call “sincere.” His American handlers worry that he will not eat enough, that he will not make it back to the gym, that his Filipino entourage is stealing him blind. They worry that he will fire them.

Koncz stares at Pacquiao’s chicken, willing it into his mouth. Finally, after an extended exegesis of John 1:12, Pacquiao pauses. He looks at his plate. His hand touches his fork. But his eyes wander; he notes, across the table, my empty plate. “Why doesn’t she have food?” he asks Koncz. Then, sternly, before I can protest: “Be compassionate.” He turns a Bible page. Koncz relents, and serves me.

NEARLY THREE YEARS AGO, a boxer named Juan Manuel Marquez caught Pacquiao with a short right hand. Pacquiao pitched forward, stiff as a falling log, and stayed asleep for over a minute. When he finally came to, surrounded by cameras, it wasn’t God he called for, or Freddie Roach, but a childhood friend. “*Boy nasan ka?*” he asked. “Buboy, where are you?” Buboy Fernandez, a baby-faced marshmallow of a man, was cradling Pacquiao’s head in his arms. He had run from his corner and turned Pacquiao over. Crying, he reached into Pacquiao’s mouth and pulled out his mouth guard. *Is the fight over?* Fernandez told him that it was.

Pacquiao is not an easy person to know: difficult, unpredictable, often churlish, given to answer direct questions with either religious platitudes or monosyllabic nonresponses. Will he win this fight? His eyes dart back and forth. “If God wants.” How is he different from the way he was five years ago? He stares at his hands, flexing and stretching his fingers. “I became a Christian.” What does he want for his kids? “That they will serve God.” On television he smiles through the silence, lets sportscasters fill the spaces in between. Even when he sticks to monosyllables, the syllable he gives can be the wrong one. Are you more comfortable here or in the Philippines? “Here,” says Pacquiao, which is an extraordinary thing for a sitting congressperson to say of a foreign country.

Given his distaste for direct questions, Pacquiao relies heavily on Fernandez, and by extension the rest of the entourage. But his is not the kind of entourage that looks anything like the fairly terrifying pack of men assembled by, say, Mayweather. Money steps off his private jet and in his wake walk half a dozen admirers, black and white, barrel-chested, each taller than he is. Pacquiao’s entourage includes one Jack Russell (“PacMan”) and at least two dozen stubby-legged, middle-aged Filipino men. They walk in front and behind and to the side of their man, potbellies preceding them, gesturing with their hands. Their fat arms brush one another. They get tangled in PacMan’s leash.

On a Saturday morning at Wild Card, Pacquiao’s men laze about the gym, limbs splayed over exercise balls, backs against the ring. I ask Marvin Somodio, Roach’s Filipino assistant, where they would work if not for Pacquiao, and he laughs out loud: “They wouldn’t have jobs. Manny gives them jobs.” For the most part, the men say otherwise. Warren Tojong, who describes himself as “head of security,” used to be a police officer. JoJo State-resa, who also describes himself as “head of security,” used to be a security guard. Noel Lautenco used to install water-filtration systems, but ever since his brother-in-law introduced him to Pacquiao, he has been in charge of PacMan. Tom Falgui is Pacquiao’s lawyer and unofficial political adviser; on the way to the gym this morning, they were discussing the recent arrest of a Muslim rebel commander. Absent today is a man known in the Philippines as Pambansang Anino, or “National Shadow.” In photo after photo, he appears as a serious, fist-pumping, square-headed gentleman, inches away from Pacquiao’s face. When I ask Fernandez what that guy’s job is, he just shakes his head.

Fernandez sits beside a second assistant, Neri, who is in charge of cooking and wakes at 4:30 to make breakfast. Neri has two assistants, whom he calls “special children.” “They make him lose his mind,” Fernandez explains.

When Pacquiao was 16 and Fernandez was 21, the boxer had found his calling, but Fernandez was a school dropout and headed nowhere. Pacquiao made it his business to find his friend employment, hooking him up with a job as a janitor at the Manila gym where Pacquiao trained. Fernandez had no real interest in the sport. “Boxing,” he says, “was not my heart.” It took two years for Pacquiao to demand that Fernandez put on some pads and mitts. He was going to practice striking.

“I said no,” Fernandez recalls. “I cannot sustain the pain.” But Pacquiao pushed. “If you listen to me,” he said, “you will become a trainer someday.” Today, Fernandez trains at a gym back home, called PacMan Wild Card. No one bothered to ask Roach for use of the name, but the trainer is not complaining. Without Buboy, Roach would struggle to steady Pacquiao, to know when he is hurting, to deal with his superstitions, such as the idea that giving blood is enervating and drinking anything colder than body temperature is dangerous. Fernandez knows that Pacquiao needs, after a weigh-in, beef broth and warm milk.

“Every time he moves his eyes I know what he wants,” says Fernandez. “He’s like a baby. How you treat your baby, I the same treat to him. Every time when he sleeps at night, I do his hair.” Fernandez smooths his hair. “His nose.” He massages his nose.

“His legs.”

W

HEN OSCAR DE LA HOYA was looking for a fight in 2008, he sought a rematch with Mayweather, who took himself out of contention by temporarily retiring, then approached Ricky Hatton, who declined. Pacquiao was the third choice, likely because the size disparity—four inches in height, six in reach—was so large that the bout read as a joke until the moment it began.

From the first round, Pacquiao seemed to exist in a different dimension from De La Hoya, moving at one-and-a-half speed. He extends his left arm and right leg, snaps it all back in a blink, ducks, and snaps off two more jabs. Punches come from every direction, and they land. De La Hoya is knowable; we watch him set up strikes, positioning his hips, balancing as he thinks through his next move. Pacquiao’s strikes gather invisibly and emerge from all sides: a lopping hook to the ear, a swooping uppercut to the chin.

“This is getting embarrassing,” an HBO announcer says in the fourth round. By the eighth, De La Hoya gives up, and millions of Americans have learned to pronounce the name: *Pack-ee-ow*.

A southpaw, Pacquiao is what is called a “high-volume puncher,” known for a combination of speed and power. Beyond this trick of balance, there is the sheer unpredictability of a Pacquiao onslaught, the ability to conjure a strike without all of the small, telling movements that make that strike possible. It was Roach who taught Pacquiao to stop leaning so hard on his left hand, but it’s still the left we watch and wait for, the arm that carries “knockout power.” That’s the arm on which you can read the names of Pacquiao’s wife and four of his children: Jimuel, Michael, Princess, Queen. There’s also Israel, whom he hasn’t gotten around to adding, and Emman, whom he never will.

According to Emman’s mother, Joanna Rose Bacosa, she met Pacquiao while working as a receptionist at a hotel in Manila. She claims that he was “extremely pleased” to hear she was pregnant and persuaded her to quit her job. He paid her maternity bills

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when she gave birth in 2004, and was “beside himself with joy” to find it was a boy, until, she claims, he cut them off without explanation. She also claims that he threatened to kidnap the child if she did not keep his paternity quiet. Bacosa filed a lawsuit in 2006, including in her statement a posed, smiling family photo of herself, Pacquiao, and a small boy with Pacquiao’s wide mouth.

“I am asking permission to keep my silence,” reads Pacquiao’s bizarre counter-affidavit, which hints at an affair but complains about the complaint. “If I really am the father of the child, I have given more than enough financial support to her ... It’s as if they don’t know that this complaint brings with it problems to a boxer’s career.”

That was approximately the position of the Philippine president’s husband, First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo, before the case was dismissed for lack of evidence. “Why are they doing this to Manny?” he asked in a television interview. “Instead of honoring and protecting him, why are they destroying him?”

This plea for self-censorship is a savvy one, in that Pacquiao’s relationship to silence has been unusually profitable for a man of such celebrity. Where there are holes in his story, we tend to fill them with assumptions of naïveté and good intentions. His political will is not a desire for power but a desire to lift the poor. His massive tax irregularities are attributed not to avarice but innocence. His win over De La Hoya is due to skill, heart, and pure *Rocky*-esque grit, not the fact that De La Hoya, who strug-

they were still in the gym and Pacquiao was deep into a set of sit-ups. Sternburg laughed, assuming that Koncz was joking.

“You can’t do this,” he told Pacquiao, mid-sit-up. “I’m not doing the singing,” said Pacquiao. “I really don’t want to do it.”

When Pacquiao arrived at the studio, a producer separated the boxer from the group and led him straight to a waiting Will Ferrell. Pacquiao relented, and by the time Koncz saw the boxer again, he was deep into the second verse of John Lennon’s “Imagine.” A strange moment in the history of late night had begun.

In what Kimmel introduces as “a special night for lovers of music,” Will Ferrell, head to toe in white, croons: “Imagine all the people.” He is playing the character we have come to expect of him, that mixture of neediness, megalomania, and earnest self-regard. Pacquiao slaps his knee and looks into the distance; he appears to be actually imagining all of the people. In his thin, soft voice, sliding in and out of pitch, utterly without irony, he sings: “Imagine there’s no country.” One can read this performance as that of a sincere and introverted man, more comfortable opening his mouth to sing other people’s words than producing any of his own, too innocent for his cynical surroundings. One might also see a man, expert at violence, surrounded by yes-men, preposterously overconfident about his capacity to conquer other realms. The failure to differentiate between abilities we have and those we do not is a quality

“HE’S LIKE A BABY. EVERY TIME WHEN HE SLEEPS AT NIGHT, I DO HIS HAIR, HIS NOSE, HIS LEGS.”

gles with addiction, later admitted to drinking during training camp. Better not to dwell on the Philippine experience with celebrity governance, which has not gone particularly well.

Freddie Roach says he has seen Pacquiao angry twice in his life. Once, Roach spoke to him about playing darts late into the night, and Pacquiao gave him the silent treatment for five days. Another time, Pacquiao had just weighed in, and Fernandez brought him his beef broth. “He forgot the warm milk,” Roach says, “and Manny slapped him right in the face.”

MUCH OF THE BUSINESS of the Wild Card Gym today turns on waiting for Manny Pacquiao to show up. An ever-present, wary-looking man named Rob Peters (“head of security”) watches the door. Roach leans on the ring, arms crossed, and lets the ropes carry his weight. A camera crew from HBO sets up cameras.

The television reporters were told two o’clock; it’s three now. “We’re hoping for an hour with Manny,” says a reporter. Fred Sternburg, Manny’s publicist, says “maybe” and shoots me a look of extreme skepticism.

Half of Sternburg’s job involves telling those promised time with Pacquiao by friends of friends of friends that these people have no authority to promise anything. Sternburg calls them “ventriloquists.” Just this week, he had to tell ESPN that the alleged interview opportunity arranged by “Manny Pacquiao’s business manager” bore no relation to Pacquiao’s actual schedule.

Even when the promise is made with Pacquiao’s support, his handlers struggle. Five years ago, Pacquiao was scheduled to sing a duet with Will Ferrell on *Jimmy Kimmel Live*. “Manny doesn’t want to do it,” Koncz told Sternburg about an hour before showtime, when

we associate with children, and also with despots. Manny Pacquiao is the kind of extraordinarily generous person who will, at a casual lunch, take it upon himself to interpret the word of God for 50 men who have started following him around.

At 4:20, Noel Lautenco arrives with PacMan, a sign that Pacquiao is finally here. The boxer sweeps in a moment later in a starched pink collared shirt. He sits down as the camera crew sets lamps behind him. The reporter attempts to draw him out. What will he do the day of the fight? How will he prepare?

“The day of the fight I will be excited,” he says.

Does he have any special feelings about Mayweather? How does it feel to be the underdog?

“I’m not hate him.”

He stands up minutes later, and the camera crew announces that it will need some B-roll of Pacquiao shadowboxing.

“They need some B-roll,” Koncz tells Pacquiao.

“I forgot to tell you,” says Roach, “they need 15 minutes of B-roll.”

Pacquiao looks straight at Koncz, then at Roach. His face doesn’t move, but he appears to be listening. The reporters discuss the shots they need, where the light is. Roach is drawn into conversation. They are all abuzz with cinematic vision.

“Wrap your hands,” Roach says a moment later to no one, because Manny Pacquiao has left the gym.

The crowd pushes open the gym door into the bright afternoon light. Pacquiao is walking toward the Thai restaurant, his back to us. To his left is Fernandez; to his right Neri. He lifts both arms straight, on the shoulders of his men. No one will miss the B-roll. When the interview runs, all the awkward silences will be sliced out, the light will come from behind, and Manny will smile, laugh, and say nothing in particular. ■

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A top-down photograph of a woman and a child sitting at a wooden table. The table is covered with various food items: a plate of roasted vegetables (beets, carrots, and leafy greens), a bowl of corn on the cob, a loaf of bread on a cutting board with tomatoes, a bowl of yogurt with granola, and a plate of roasted potatoes and carrots. There are also some small jars and a glass of water. A large pile of dark soil is scattered on the table, and the woman and child are looking at the camera with smiles.

Cute Family.

And You Should See Their Bacteria.

The scientific clan bringing microbe diversity to the dinner table.

BY **John Swansburg**

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CODY PICKENS

NEW YORK

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APRIL 20–MAY 3, 2015

JUSTIN AND ERICA
SONNENBURG WITH THEIR
CHILDREN, CLAIRE (RIGHT)
AND CAMILLE, AND DOG,
LOUIS, IN THEIR HOME IN
REDWOOD CITY, CALIFORNIA.





ON A SATURDAY

evening in late March, as the sun ducked behind the ridges separating Redwood City from the Pacific, I stood on the porch of an unassuming bungalow holding a bag of my own feces. I was to be a dinner guest of Justin and Erica Sonnenburg, Stanford scientists who study the microbiota, the ecosystem of microbial organisms that live inside us and may have a role to play in preventing maladies such as obesity, irritable bowel syndrome, and diabetes. Earlier in the day, I'd helped Justin, Erica, and their two young daughters harvest lacinato and curly kale from their front-yard-garden beds, then spread a fresh layer of turkey manure for the next round of plantings. Afterward, as I drank a refreshing kale-and-pear smoothie Erica had prepared as a reward for our efforts, Justin sidled up to me with a proposition. "You've embarked on an exciting new endeavor," he said. "No pressure at all, but if you want to document it"—he pulled from his shirt pocket a test tube with a miniature plastic spoon inside. A few hours later, I stood on Justin and Erica's front steps holding the now-burdened tube, which I'd tactfully concealed in a Starbucks cup, then packed in a clear plastic bag of hotel ice.

Our colons are home to 100 trillion bacteria, representing some 1,200 different species, which have evolved in symbiosis with their hosts over the course of millennia. Their cells outnumber our own by a factor of ten, but much of the microbiota remains terra incognita, and the precise ways in which it affects our health are still dimly understood. The Sonnenburgs believe, however, that the root of many Western diseases can be traced to our languishing guts, which we've done about as good a job looking after as we have the rain forests and the whales.

The American diet is high in processed foods digested in the stomach and small intestine, leaving little fuel for the microbes in our large intestine. The result, they say, has been a "mass extinction event," in which species of bacteria that have lived in our bodies for most of human history have died off, making it harder for our microbiota to perform its role in tuning our immune system and regulating inflammation.

I'd recently started an experiment in living according to the precepts of the Sonnenburgs' new book, *The Good Gut*, which attempts to correct this seemingly dire state of affairs by offering suggestions for how to nurture a thriving community of bacteria. Much of their advice comes down to two basic ideas: (1) Stop trying to sterilize your home as if it were a surgical theater, which kills off more good bacteria than bad, and (2) eat lots and lots and lots of fiber, which is digested in the lower intestine.

I was just a few weeks into the gut diet when I met the Sonnenburgs, and my bacteria were surely still in an impoverished state, thanks to a diet heretofore deficient in fiber and rich in Chinese takeout and Bugles. Justin suggested I have my stool sequenced now, so that I could get the microbial equivalent of the "before" picture in a weight-loss ad. When Erica greeted me at the door, she was briefly perplexed by my parcel—the previous evening I'd brought a more traditional dinner-guest gift, a bottle of Burgundy—then remembered the sample. "Oh, I know what that is!" she said and, gamely pulling the chilled cup from the bag, tossed it in the freezer next to a quart of Häagen-Dazs.

In the living room, Claire, 9, and Camille, 6, conducted a pillow fight on the sofa (GO WITH YOUR GUT, read one pillow). Justin, who is wiry, with a friendly intensity, and Erica, who is quieter but equally exuberant when talk turns to microbes, busied themselves preparing tonight's high-fiber meal. Justin treats the kitchen like an extension of his lab. He's an avid baker and favors sourdoughs, which leaven with bacteria as well as yeast. Tonight, he rolled his sourdough out thin for use in a flatbread pizza piled high with veggies. Erica worked on a kale salad made from our morning haul. We'd be washing down the meal with his home-brewed beer, an unfiltered ale still shot through with the live cultures that fermented it.

When dinner was ready, we sat down at the dining-room table, next to a large photograph of wormlike bacteria. I asked Erica if it was any bacteria in particular. "It's *E. coli*," she said.

Eating with Justin and Erica requires some intestinal fortitude. The previous day, I'd visited them at the Sonnenburg Lab,

which Justin runs and where Erica is a senior researcher. Around noon, we headed to the cafeteria for lunch. "The American salad is actually pretty pathetic," Justin remarked on our way. "There's like a few leaves of lettuce and maybe a cucumber. There's not that much dietary fiber." Eager to eat something more satisfying for my "bugs," as the Sonnenburgs fondly call their microbes, I followed Justin and Erica's lead as they heaped their plates high with spinach, beets, beans, and, inevitably, quinoa. At Justin's suggestion, we took our lunches back to the lab, where a graduate student was giving a detailed PowerPoint presentation on the devastating effects of diarrhea on the microbiota. The Sonnenburgs ate their salads with undiminished appetites.

At Saturday dinner, the conversation turned to the family dog, a Havanese named Louis, a seemingly safe topic. Louis is named for Louis Pasteur, the father of germ theory, and while he's a beloved member of the family, he also plays a role in their efforts to maintain maximal gut health. Dogs are apparently excellent vectors for microbes, spreading bacteria on their fur and tongues to their human co-habitants; dog owners have been shown to have greater microbial diversity than the dogless.

"I wonder what Louis's microbiota looks like," I wondered aloud.

"We know," Justin said.

"You sequenced his stool?" I asked.

"We did," he said.

Justin explained that while human Americans tend to have minimal fiber intake, canine Americans are doing better. "They've totally optimized this fiber issue," he said of dog-food companies. "It's not for the health of the dog; it's for the convenience of the owner. Nothing will switch a dog owner's choice of food quicker than seeing digestive issues that you have to deal with on the sidewalk. It's like, *We're buying a different food.*"

"So are our dogs eating better than us?" I asked.

"You could argue that it's too solid, too cohesive," Justin said of Louis's stool.

"It's borderline constipated," Erica agreed. "If it was my bowel movement, I'd be like, *This is not the best.*"

"But it can hit the sidewalk and you can pick it up without it leaving a big smudge," Justin said.

THE SONNENBURGS' advice on how to eat is rooted in their scientific work, which explores the effect of changes in diet on the microbiota. At their lab, Erica showed me the results of her current experiment, in which she successfully decreased the diversity of microbial communities in the guts of mice by feeding

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TRADE WELCOME

them a low-fiber diet. But *The Good Gut* is as inspired by the ongoing experiment at the Sonnenburg home as it is by the work of the Sonnenburg Lab. Shortly after they arrived at Stanford, Claire, then 3 years old, experienced persistent, painful constipation. “The issue became so bad that most trips to the bathroom ended in tears,” they write. “We felt that we, of all people, should not have a child with gastrointestinal issues.”

Neither Sonnenburg thought they had poor eating habits. But in the wake of Claire’s distress, they started carefully cataloguing their diet, and were dismayed at what they found. “I mean, we weren’t eating Twinkies and McDonald’s,” Justin said. “But you know, flour-tortilla cheese quesadillas, white pasta, white rice.”

The family embarked on a radical dietary rethink, making a commitment to fiber consumption that today borders on the comical. The Sonnenburgs believe that the best fuel for your bugs comes from polysaccharides, the complex carbohydrates found in plant matter. And because different microbes feast on different types, they seek out a wide range of sources, including whole grains, beans, and seeds. Erica makes jam in which she substitutes polysaccharide-rich chia seeds for sugar. (I also sampled a surprisingly tasty chia-seed chocolate pudding.) Most brewers dispose of their spent grains, turning them into compost or animal feed. Justin pours the high-fiber brewing by-product—imagine a sodden Grape-Nut, depleted of all flavor—over his morning yogurt.

When Justin bakes, he does so with his own hand-ground flour. As we prepped two sourdough loaves one afternoon, he showed me why he goes to the trouble, pouring out a dusting of store-bought wheat flour beside a pinch of store-bought white. The wheat was darker in color, but appeared just as refined as the white. He then invited me to take a turn on his hand-cranked wheat-berry mill. The result of several minutes of tricep-taxing effort was flour that was noticeably rougher and, as a result, Justin said, more likely to arrive in the colon undigested, where our microbes could have at it.

This hardly seems like a kid-friendly approach to eating, but Claire and Camille by now have been indoctrinated. I watched them devour jicama, mashed sardines on an English cracker that had the appearance of 60-grit sandpaper, forests of kale. “You have

to view what your kids are eating just like you view bedtime, going to school, buckling their seat belt,” Justin said. “They may not want it, but it’s what’s best for them. You just tell them there’s no option.”

One night, at dinner, the girls recounted a recent trip to Colorado during which Justin spoke at a conference on the microbiota. The kids’ meal at the ski lodge came with what was advertised as a miniature cookie for dessert. But when the meal arrived, the cookie was not mini. Claire and Camille were scandalized. “It was this big,” Camille noted, making a circle with her fingers that

might be traced to malfunctioning immune responses in the gut. At a dinner that night for conference speakers, Weil offered to connect Justin with the literary agent who engineered his first megahit, 1995’s *Spontaneous Healing*, and to send him one of his own book proposals to use as a model.

The timing was propitious: Michael Pollan had just written a lengthy article on the gut in *The New York Times Magazine*, in which Justin had figured prominently. Marketers were touting the gut-nourishing qualities of everything from sauerkraut to buttermilk, and news outlets were running stories on the lifesaving treatment known as fecal transplant, in which a donor’s healthy microbiota is used to fight off the antibiotic-resistant bacteria *C. difficile*.

In admirably plain language, the Sonnenburgs’ book describes the latest science, how our microbiota functions and how it protects us from disease. They explain that if our immune system is the body’s Department of Defense, fighting off infection, gut microbes are the diplomats, determining what’s harmful and what’s harmless. The more robust the microbiota, the more sophisticated the diplomacy and the less likely the immune system will overreact and launch harmful autoimmune responses or fail to defend against invaders.

But if *The Good Gut* is a success, it will likely be because, like the best-selling gluten-free and Paleo diet guides before it, it taps into our interest in how best to optimize the functioning of our bodies and our fears that our modern lifestyles are harming us. For the Sonnenburgs, optimization entails making peace with our bacterial bedfellows, rather than trying to Clorox-wipe

them to oblivion. *The Good Gut* describes the devastating toll that antibiotics take on the microbiota as well as other forms of antibacterial practice, like the growing frequency of C-sections, which rob newborns of a bacteria-rich trip through the vaginal canal, and the use of formula, which deprives them of both good bacteria from Mom and special carbohydrates in breast milk that help infant gut flora bloom.

Most of the book, though, is given over to eating. Like the Paleo diet, the gut diet looks suspiciously on processed foods and fondly on the habits of our preindustrial ancestors. Erica likes to wear a T-shirt silk-screened with an image of a hominid holding a tray of fast food. She told me the shirt captures how our diet has evolved far more rapidly than



THE FAMILY’S FECAL SAMPLES STORED IN THEIR FREEZER.

suggested, to me, a normal-size cookie. “I couldn’t finish it,” she said. I asked Claire if she finished hers.

“I powered through,” she said.

THE COUPLE’S DECISION to take their gut theories to the masses came two years ago at a nutrition conference in Seattle hosted by Andrew Weil, the bald, bearded guru of integrative medicine. Justin had been asked to give a plenary talk on the microbiota that Weil would later write was “the highlight of the event for me.” Weil believes the ongoing degradation of our microbial communities Justin described might explain a series of health developments that had confounded him, like the rising rates of peanut allergies and gluten sensitivity, both of which

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our bodies. When scientists study the microbiota of a traditional hunter-gatherer society like that of the Hadza in Tanzania, who eat ten times the fiber of the average American, they find far greater microbial diversity. (The Hadza also slaughter animals with their hands and clean off the blood using the animal's digesta—a boost to microbial exposure.) The Hadza have avoided Western afflictions such as obesity and diabetes, which the Sonnenburgs see as evidence that their guts are in better shape than our own.

Most diet guides pander to our narcissism—do this and you'll feel, and look, great. *The Good Gut* more often makes the altruistic pitch that we should all do our part to fend off the decline in Western bacterial diversity. Their appeal to Save the Bugs is one Justin and Erica honed on their daughters. When Claire and Camille do occasionally resist their parents' healthy-eating habits, their parents remind the girls that they're not just eating for themselves but for their microbes too.

I've used a version of this logic on myself. Since starting the gut diet, I've come to think of myself as akin to Lord Grantham from *Downton Abbey*. I am the lord of a manor over which I have ostensibly unlimited power. Yet if I am a cruel and ungenerous master to my tenant farmers and downstairs servants, they might revolt or simply decamp, especially at this precarious historical moment, when the forces of modernity have beset our ancient social arrangement. I wouldn't have thought that noblesse oblige would make for a powerful dieting aid, but it has. When I've been tempted to cheat, an image has flashed before me of my embattled microbes, those blameless tillers of my intestinal soil, and I've stayed my hand.

Not all scientists believe the gut is in decline, however. Jonathan Eisen, who studies the microbiome at UC Davis, made the case to me that just because the Hadza have more strains of bacteria in their colons doesn't mean we all once had those bugs: They could be a feature of the Hadza's Tanzanian environment, not a relic passed down from some common ancestor. The science writer Ed Yong, who is also writing a book on microbes, has argued that it's a mistake to think of any set of bacteria as "ideal"—the Western microbiota may be as well evolved for the modern diet as the Hadza's is for the premodern one. As for our eating habits, Eisen is not convinced, based on the studies he's read, that the health benefits of a high-fiber diet are necessarily the result of nourishing our gut bacteria.

Eisen keeps a blog in which he periodically bestows an "Overselling the Microbiome Award" to scientists (and journalists) who hype the potential power of the gut.

While he shares the Sonnenburgs' bullishness about gut science, he's skeptical that it will be the key that will unlock all of Western disease. And he fears that overselling the still-nascent science can have negative effects. After a recent talk at South by Southwest, two parents came up to him and told him that they were giving their kids fecal transplants, at home, in the hopes of curing their autism: a potentially dangerous measure based on a very preliminary study of mice.

The Sonnenburgs admit that our knowledge of the microbiota is in its infancy and frequently remind their readers that scientists have a long way to go before we understand all the gut's underlying mechanisms. And none of their lifestyle recommendations are nearly so radical as a do-it-yourself fecal transplant—few scientists or doctors would object to the idea that Americans should eat more vegetables, or pet more dogs. But unlike Eisen, they argue that it is imperative that we start caring for our long-overlooked bugs, even if we've yet to prove definitively that they are the lever by which the rest of our health can be regulated.

Five years of nurturing his microbiota and protecting it from antibacterial incursions has paid off for Justin, at least. Erica told me that when she compared a stool sample of his taken recently with an earlier one, the diversity of her husband's gut bugs had nearly doubled.

The Sonnenburgs acknowledge that this is not a fact they could ever publish in a scientific journal. They don't have any definitive proof that diet, or the other measures they've taken to make their home hospitable to their bugs, is the reason Justin's gut has made so much progress. (Or the reason Erica professes to no longer suffer from the allergies that once plagued her.) Even in their own lab, there seems to be no consensus that a high-fiber diet is the essence of good health. Canvassing the staff, I found only a couple of researchers who had signed on to the gut diet and none at the grind-your-own-wheat-berries level. Drew Hryckowian, an affable postdoc from Pittsburgh, told me he was eating more beans since joining the lab in part because they're high in fiber but also because they're an inexpensive source of protein in wildly expensive Silicon Valley. "I've never paid so much money for rent in my whole life," he said.

But as microbiota research continues, the Sonnenburgs are confident we'll learn more about how our gut works and find better tools for repairing the damage done. I'm still awaiting the results of my stool sequencing, a process that remains slow given current technology. Still, I'd venture my bacteria are

considerably happier than they were when I was all but starving them, though the first few weeks were rocky. The Sonnenburgs suggest a gradual ramping up of fiber consumption to avoid bloating or discomfort.

Justin recently recruited to the lab a graduate student who will be focusing on inventing a device that would allow you to collect a fecal sample at home, suspend it in solution, plug a meter into your iPhone, and check on the health of your gut bugs. "Wouldn't it be wonderful, every time you go to the bathroom in the morning, to know if what you've done in the past week has had an impact on your microbiota?" he asked. His vision is of a nation of amateur microbiologists working toward a better understanding of our intestinal inhabitants one bowel movement at a time.

ON MY LAST DAY out West, I climbed into the family's Toyota 4Runner and we drove out to the Whole Foods in Redwood City. The supplements aisle is where the promise of the gut meets the predations of the market, and I was curious what Justin and Erica would make of the store's cabinet of probiotic curiosities, which claim to foster a healthy gut without the need for massive kale intake. The bacteria on offer were mostly the same strains you'd find in yogurt and kefir, only in pill form. (Expensive pill form—many are a dollar-a-day habit.) Erica explained that there are few bacterial strains approved for sale in the U.S. Most companies hawk the same old strains to a public that can't tell *Bifidobacterium lactis* from *Lactobacillus acidophilus*. Probiotics are good for us, she said, but they're transient—they can't repopulate a decimated gut—and we may never identify some magic combination of strains that will keep us healthy.

The Sonnenburgs prefer to dose themselves with probiotic foods, like fermented pickles (if they're not refrigerated, they're not fermented) and kimchee. They eat yogurt by the gallon, especially during cold season. Justin cultures his own kefir from mail-order grains. The kefir grain is a microbial community that, if fed a continuous diet of milk, will essentially live indefinitely. Justin told me that in certain Eastern European countries, kefir grains can be passed down from generation to generation. So far, he has no takers in his own household. "There's a little bit of a vomit taste, in my opinion," said Erica.

"Smell needs work, taste needs work," said Claire.

"I'm the only one who didn't get sick this winter," replied Justin. "And I drank it every day." ■

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—
Monica Vitti, Italy, 1971.





TO WEAR A TRENCH COAT AS A WOMAN is to effortlessly emit a sense of mystery. Slightly rumpled, perhaps even stained with tea, it is appropriated mens-wear of the highest order: stylish but practical; glamorous but anonymous; as comfortable in an Aston Martin as in a lorry. Redolent of steamer trunks and a ragged passport with extra pages, ideally a trench coat has a ballpoint pen from an international hotel residing permanently in its breast pocket.

Developed for battle in the 19th century—the extra fabric over the right shoulder was initially intended to soften the recoil of a gun—trench coats were popularized post–World War I, when the British government, having ordered thousands too many for its officers, distributed the leftovers among civilians after the armistice. Their practicality has been a selling point ever since. A 1937 Burberry advertisement boasted that its famous khaki coats were “tempered to territorial conditions throughout the world.” The trench coat, after all, is really nothing more than an amalgam of handy and phonetically romantic features: grenade loops, epaulettes, storm flaps.

No other article of clothing—not even the blue jean—has retained its original form so literally as the trench. There are variations, surely (PVC, fur-lined, sleeveless, leather), but the classic silhouette in a not-too-orange beige is still the best and most desirable. Perhaps that’s because it can be so many things to so many people. On

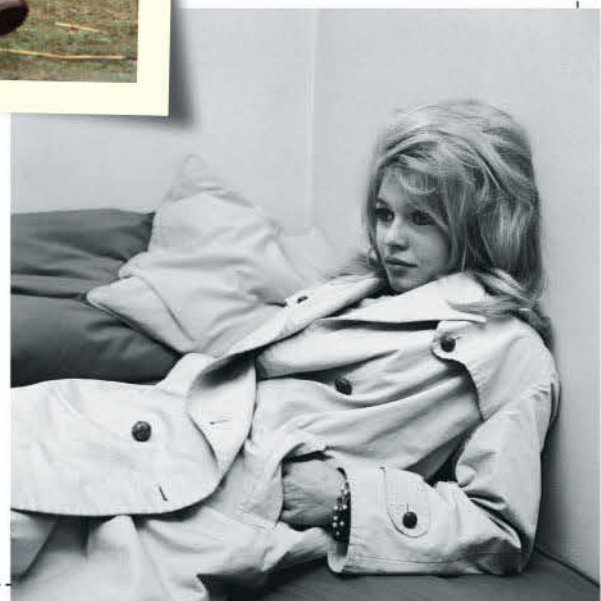
a man, it can telegraph the intrepid grit of cinematic spies and foreign correspondents; on a woman, it can run the gamut from coquettish to outright erotic. The icy-haired Catherine Deneuve twirled around a soggy Cherbourg in one, Humphrey Bogart delivered his most famous mid-Atlantic lines in one. Both Meryl Streep and Dustin Hoffman wore them in *Kramer vs. Kramer*. Tintin sports a trench coat, as does Inspector Clouseau. A beltless one appears as a joke in *Seinfeld*.

And there’s a reason Helmut Newton chose to cloak his famous nudes in them. No garment is more perverse in spite of its practicality. Drab, cinched at the waist like a bathrobe, popular among flashers, the trench coat is almost comically concealing. What could be underneath but flesh?

ALICE GREGORY



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT, Tintin; Humphrey Bogart in ‘Casablanca,’ 1942; Eartha Kitt, 1954; John Cusack in ‘Say Anything,’ 1989; Jackie Onassis, 1970s; Marilyn Monroe, 1950s; Brigitte Bardot, 1963; Frank Sinatra, 1958; Peter Falk as Lieutenant Columbo, 1970s; David Hockney, 1985; Kermit the Frog, 2006; Catherine Deneuve in ‘The Umbrellas of Cherbourg,’ 1964; Prince Charles, 1976.



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net-a-porter.com.



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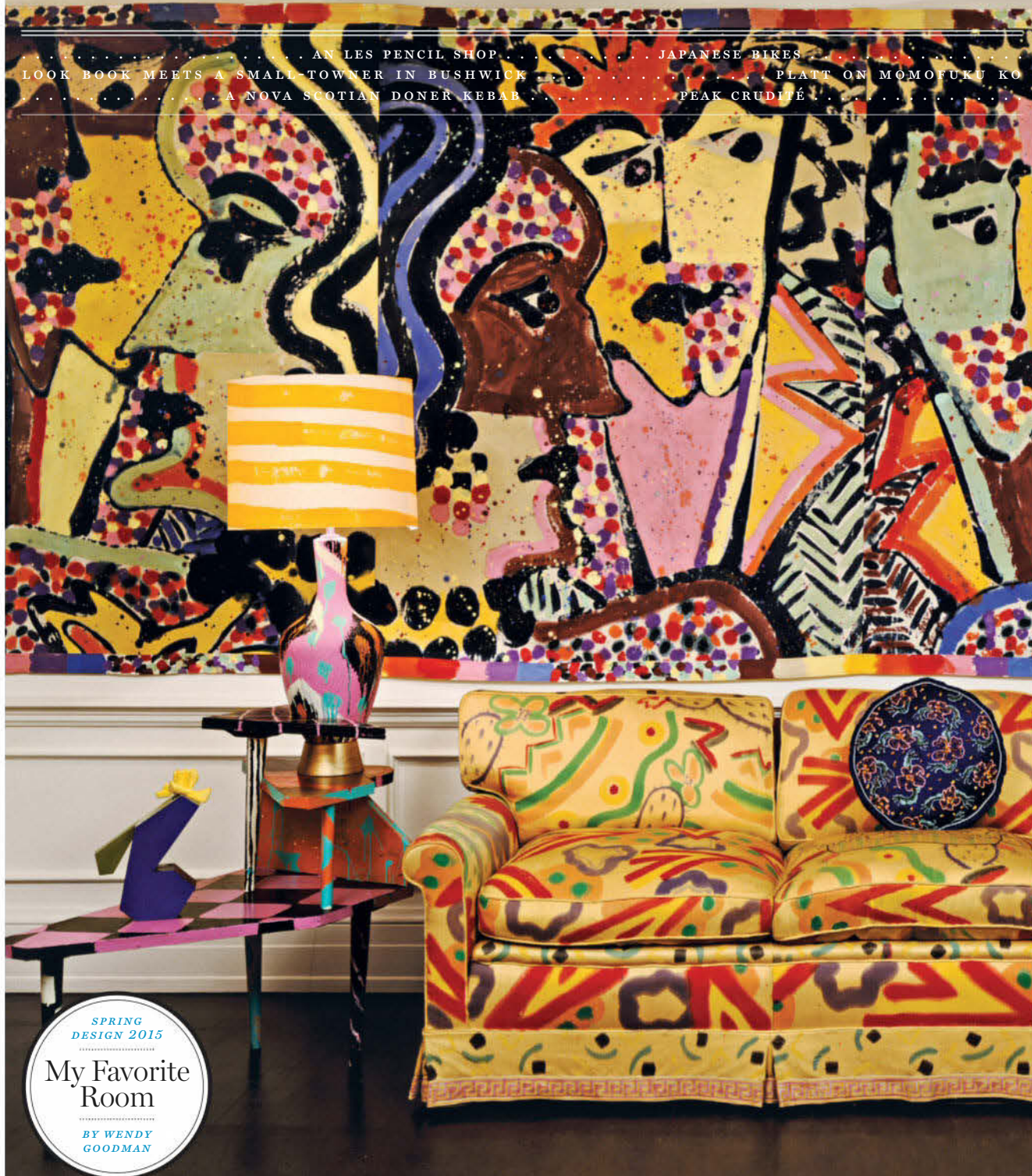
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THERE ARE A LOT of wonderful rooms in this city. Which is why setting out to choose the best one is a ridiculous thing to attempt. But for our annual “Spring Design” roundup, we asked the city’s top designers to do just that. And after some serious hand-wringing, they returned with the bathrooms, living rooms, and kitchens that have stuck with them the most throughout the years. A few designers, like Doug Meyer, were unable to pick just one; he chose **Holly Solomon’s** kitchen (on page 97), and her living room, pictured here. When he saw it for the first time, he says, “I was just freaking mesmerized.”

BEST BETS

ASK A SHOP CLERK

Caroline Weaver,
24-year-old
proprietor of the new
CW Pencil Enterprise
(100A Forsyth St.),
goes beyond the No. 2.



Why pencils? I'm trying to show people that there are pencils that write so much better than the standard Ticonderogas—smear-resistant Tombow pencils from Japan, or WWII-era pencils that have plastic barrels instead of metal because at the time all of the metal was being put toward the war. I sell the Eberhard Faber Blackwing—John Steinbeck's favorite—for \$50. There's a little desk with samples of all my pencils, so you can know what it's like to write with them, sharpen them, feel them—and smell them.

THE FUTURE

➤ The family behind Jim's Shoe Repair goes high-tech and high-end with **Cobbler Concierge**.



The just-launched cobblerconcierge.com allows users to place their most precious shoes in prepaid packaging, ship them to a 5,000-square-foot workshop in Queens, and have them returned to their feet in about a week (step-by-step notes on the job are uploaded to your profile page). Italian-crafted sewing and finishing machines restore the candy-red luster to Louboutin soles, change the leather on Saint Laurent stilettoes from gold to black patent, and give the works to a pair of winter-worn Frye boots (salt removal, leather staining, added insulation). With repairs starting at about \$40, prices are pretty much the same as those at Jim's brick-and-mortar space, which, incidentally, just beat back Duane Reade to keep its 59th Street lease.



FIRST LOOK

On April 20, the Venturas—husband Michael is a design consultant and wife Caroline a goldsmith—will open **Calliope** (349 W. 12th St.), a mid-century-focused furniture shop on the ground floor of their multipurpose converted brownstone.

A library including early editions of Carl Jung and new titles from Taschen.

Turntable spinning vinyls by Wendy Rene and Lee Hazlewood (from \$30).

Furniture vignettes including a blond leather chair by Michael Felix (\$3,000).

Splatterware by Chris Earl (\$40), Doug Johnston woven bowls (\$30).

A Ventura-designed 12-foot-long table made of reclaimed wood and brass (price upon request).

All art on the walls is for sale, including jazzy geometric prints by Chicago-based Chad Kouri.

Adjacent gallery space, with classes (from \$150) like wood joinery.

TOP FIVE

➤ **East of the Mississippi** (164 Havemeyer St., Williamsburg) is stocked exclusively with indie women's clothing and home accents from this side of, well, you know. Here, creative director JJ Maxwell's picks for living an East Coast-ish lifestyle.



"Everybody has loved the General Manufacturing leather **jump ropes** (\$80 in black, blue, or rainbow), which are part of a little corner of giftable men's essentials I put together."



"I want bags that look as good on the inside as the outside. This **leather-and-cowhide tote** (\$320), handmade in Chicago by CHC Bags, has great accents and pockets."



"I love the use of different, sustainably harvested woods in these Maxx&Unicorn **trays** (\$95), which are all made in Greenpoint. They're really durable."



"Souda did all of our store's lighting and parts of our shelving. Their **Kawa dishes** (\$45) have a beautiful molten-lava feel and are manufactured here in East Williamsburg."



"This is my personal favorite among the nine antique-loomed **Brahms blankets** we carry (\$254). They have structure to them, and they're not too fuzzy."

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Six-ounce **Areaware Liquid Body Flask**, \$45 at MoMA Design Store, 81 Spring St.



Seventeen-ounce **teakwood S'well bottle**, \$35 at swellbottle.com.

SPLURGY



Nine-ounce **Surname Conductor flask**, \$235 at Still House, 117 E. 7th St.



Two-quart **Hammertone green bottle**, \$50 at stanley-pmi.com.

THREE-IN-ONE

➤ **Tokyobike's** new flagship (1 Prince St.), on the lip between Nolita and the Bowery, has single-speeds and nine-gears alongside Japanese homewares.



BIKES: Models like the **New Balance Limited CS** (\$925), offered in mustard or navy (to match the store's limited-edition sneaker collaboration with New Balance). For tune-ups, the first appointment

with mechanic-in-residence Thomas Horrell is free.

WARES: Vintage beer and sake glasses (\$15), water-purifying **Binchotan charcoal sticks** (\$15), and lacquered **Syosen tea canisters** with airtight lids (\$210).

GEAR: Matte helmets by **Sahn** (\$129), waterproof **Postalco riding capes** (\$350), in addition to the **New Balance kicks** (\$120).

LYDON MACGREGOR,
Student

Lydon is quite an unusual name. My legal name is Tara, but my parents called me Lily and, a few years ago, I started feeling like I wasn't a Lily anymore. It's so feminine, and I identify as gender-queer, so I started going by Lydon, which is my father and brother's middle name, and it just felt more me. And my partner, Davis, and I, we both decided to go by the pronoun *they*.

Do you and Davis live together? We do. It's us, my best friend, and a kitty cat. It feels like a little family.

Where are you from?

A small town in Pennsylvania; I always wanted to end up in New York. During my first month here, I was that idiot who couldn't stop smiling. I remember being in Union Square and a gust of wind blew my skirt up and I thought it was the most glamorous thing. Now I'm like, *Fuck the wind, what's going on, I need to get out of here.*

INTERVIEW BY
ALEXIS SWERDLOFF

LIGHTNING ROUND

Neighborhood:
Bushwick.

Favorite TV show:
Mad Men.

Coat: *Elizabeth and James.*

Style inspiration:
Cruella De Vil.
"Even though she killed puppies."

Last splurge: "
A 30-pound slab of wax for \$150. I'm making a mystic writing pad."

Favorite street:
East 9th Street.
"Because Frank O'Hara lived there."



Momofuku Ko

A Cooler Ko

David Chang's new tasting counter is more polished, less quirky, still delicious.

BY ADAM PLATT

UNLIKE MANY OF his contemporaries, David Chang has tended to be a cautious incrementalist when it comes to playing the great boom-and-bust game of restaurant-empire-building. While other prominent New York chefs ping-pong around the landscape, opening cookie-cutter fine-dining outlets in far-off fast-money destinations like Hong Kong, Vegas, and Dubai, he's mostly been content to stay close to home, tending to his own little gastronomic Yoknapatawpha County in the East Village. With the exception of one or two new dessert bars around the city, Chang has resisted the urge to spin off the famous Momofuku name (or the even more famous pork bun), and when he has expanded to unfamiliar territory outside the East Village (midtown, Toronto, and Sydney), he's opened his restaurants carefully, one at a time, in regions with old, settled dining cultures of their own.

The latest move in this deliberate set of maneuvers is the relaunching of the Momofuku empire's flagship tasting room, Ko, and by Chang's standards it passes for a major culinary event. The original Ko, which set off the gourmet-tasting-bar craze

when it opened in 2008, and launched the chef into the Michelin-starred stratosphere, used to occupy a snug, 12-seat counter space along lower First Avenue. The rebooted Ko sits on the ground floor of a large, modern, antiseptic luxury rental off the Bowery, which in the last few years has become the East Village's answer to the Meatpacking District. The room features glittering, state-of-the-art kitchen equipment (the Montague range is embossed with the Momofuku peach logo) and a three-sided, black-walnut-topped dining counter, which surrounds the bustling cooks (who all wear identical black

baseball caps) like chairs around a stage.

Many of the members of the team are the same, in particular the talented executive chef, Sean Gray, who cultivates a distracted, almost professorial air as he wanders from station to station directing his troops. But the *omakase* dinner costs \$175 at the new Ko, compared with \$85 in 2008. The space features a freestanding bar, a souped-up cellar overseen by the very knowledgeable beverage director Jordan Salcito, and an elaborate wine list that includes, among many other things, a bottle of '90 Dom Pérignon Oenothèque for \$1,300. On my

visits, the counter was filled with high-rolling gastronomists from around the world, toasting each other with artisanal sakes and flutes of biodynamic Champagne, and the room felt less like an intimate New York dining destination than an ambitious new-money wine bar somewhere in the boomtown sprawl of Shanghai or Toronto.

Not that this is a horrible thing, of course. Chang isn't really a New York cook anymore—he's an international gourmet celebrity, and the new Ko has clearly been designed with this new globe-trotting (and "World's 50 Best Restaurants"—list-reading) clientele in mind. Unlike at the old Ko (which, according to Chang, will soon be turned into a fried-chicken venture called Fuku), the menu here features at least one new dish every week, with few holdovers from the old menu (though the famous frozen foie gras is accounted for). It's filled with all sorts of trendy food-lab inventions (oyster foam, chickpea "hozon" macarons, rye mille-feuille pastries speckled with matcha powder), and many of the ingredients are drawn from the chef's far-flung travels, including Osetra caviar from Israel, bee pollen from the apiaries of Connecticut, and even a delicate shiso eau de vie, concocted for Chang by a noted perfume-maker in Provence.

This eau de shiso appeared early in one of my dinners, spritzed on a sea bream tartare mingled with jellied fish stock and little finger limes that popped pleasingly on the tongue like some exotic form of citrus caviar. After that came a slippery bowl of scallops floating in pineapple dashi broth, followed by an uni-and-hummus combination, which the kitchen brightens with olive oil

★★★
Momofuku Ko
8 Extra Pl.,
nr. 1st St.
212-203-8095
momofuku.com

★★★★ ETHEREAL

★★★★ EXCEPTIONAL

★★★ EXCELLENT

★★ VERY GOOD

★ GOOD

NO STARS NOT RECOMMENDED

THE DISH

King Bee's Halifax Donair

It's well known that Berlin is a hotbed of doner kebabs, that Turkish specialty of seasoned meat shaved off a spit and tucked into flatbread. But Nova Scotia? That's another story, one told eloquently by the new brunch menu at King Bee, the East Village's (and possible the city's) only restaurant to specialize in Acadian cuisine. It turns out, oddly enough, that a particular rendition of doner kebab—or donair, as it's known in the dives of Halifax—is the drunk food of the Canadian Maritimes. King Bee chef Jeremie Tomczak transforms the post-bar nightcap into a brunch reviver, topped with an egg and the sandwich's defining, slightly sweet white sauce.

R.R. & R.P.

On the brunch menu at **King Bee**, \$14; 424 E. 9th St., nr. Ave. A; 646-755-8088.

You can add an egg to the basic garnish of **tomato, lettuce, and macerated onion.**

Tomczak steams the **pita** to keep it soft.

A **beef-and-pork blend** is spiced with **cumin, fennel seed, coriander, and smoked paprika**, cooked low and slow, then sliced and pan-seared at service.

Evaporated milk is the star of the sauce, but there's also **pressure-cooked garlic, white vinegar, and sugar.**



and lemon zest for an extra Mediterranean kick. Sushi, when it makes its inevitable appearance, is a strip of silvery Spanish mackerel, gently blowtorched on its bottom for extra crunchiness and pressed, in the oshizushi style, over a little brick of rice layered on the inside with fermented sunflower seeds. There were also sunflower seeds scattered over a beautifully cooked piece of branzino, which I enjoyed after a delicious little pod of agnolotti dressed with shavings of black truffle and filled with celery-root cream.

On my last visit to this new, more polished, impersonal version of Ko, I sat between an Australian couple and a knowledgeable gastronome from Louisiana. The agnolotti had disappeared, replaced by small, equally tasty tortellini stuffed with Japanese kabocha squash and flavored with smoked duck aigre-doux. The branzino was gone, too (in its place was a soft block of halibut with a watercress jus). The best dish, the gentleman from Louisiana and I agreed, was a crimson slice of venison touched with fermented cranberries and served with whipped potatoes folded with funky Époisses cheese. The desserts were equally accomplished (look for the chocolate cookie flavored with mint and Fernet-Branca), although, as one studied little bite succeeded the next, I couldn't help pining for a taste of something less precious, more spontaneous, and more distinctly Momofuku, matching the cockeyed power of cereal milk, when it first appeared, or a good old-fashioned pork bun.

SCRATCHPAD

Four stars for the expert cooking, wines, and service; minus a star for the non-Momofuku prices and the impersonal vibe.

BITES

IDEAL MEAL: The set menu offers no choices, but left to our own devices: rye mille-feuille and pommes soufflés with onions; medai tartare with shiso; soft scrambled eggs with Osetra; branzino or halibut; venison with whipped potatoes; chocolate cookie with mint.

NOTE: Reservations for the two nightly seatings are taken online only, up to 15 days in advance. **HOURS:** Wednesday to Sunday 6 to 10 p.m.

PRICE: \$175 prix fixe.



TRENDLET

Crunch

Crudités stage a comeback.

MANY CHEFS CODDLE THEIR REGULARS with snip-pets of some rare crudo or house-cured ham. At **Boulud Sud**, chef Travis Swikard has been surprising his VIPs with bowls of raw vegetables. This is not some cruel form of punishment or practical joke: Stokes Farm Spring Vegetable Garden (pictured), which Swikard just put on the menu, is a rustic composition of flora, all seemingly sprouting from fertile soil. That soil, in fact, is dehydrated Niçoise olives set in a bed of whipped feta mousse, both of which are intended as garnish for the sugar-snap peas, celery hearts, fennel fronds, Thumbelina carrots, and Easter Egg radishes, among other roots and leaves that the chef arranges as artfully as a Cézanne still life. And he's not alone: Crudités have enjoyed a recent revival at

restaurants like the Polo Bar, Cafe Clover, Porchlight Bar, Dirty French, Evening Bar, and especially the Major Food Group's coastal-Italian fantasy, Santina, where the scene-stealing Giardinia crudité has become a signature dish.

Why the resurgence? Vegetables are bigger than ever now, especially in their heirloom, exotic-variety form, and they lend themselves to the sort of art-imitating-nature creativity of Michel Bras's influential salad, Gargouillou, without requiring chefs to painstakingly cook each component. But let's not forget the true if unspoken purpose of the raw, virtuous crudité: as a convenient vehicle for rich, piquant sauces, ranging from anchovy emulsion to boiled-peanut hummus, and all a very long way from Lipton's onion dip.

R.R. & R.P.

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TRADITIONALLY, the Swiss dish raclette is made by melting cheese over a roaring wood fire, ideally one located within some cozy mountain chalet. The logistics involved with melting cheeses over wood fires inside eight-seat Alphabet City storefronts being prohibitively complex, Edgar Villongo, the chef-owner of this terrific, two-month-old café, opted for an alternative. His electric countertop cheese-melter may look like something you'd lock a two-by-four into to facilitate sawing, but it gets the job done. How does it work? A half-wheel of raclette (the name of the cheese as well as the dish) is propped on its side and strapped into the device, its surface exposed to a heating rod that melts and bubbles the cut end from above. When the top layer of fromage is suitably gooey, it's scraped off with a wide knife over a plate of roast potatoes accompanied by bresaola, pickled onions, cornichons, and a sprightly arugula salad. The result is superb—rich and hearty and fairly transporting, like an Alpine getaway on Avenue A. At the moment, Raclette doesn't have a beer and wine license, which, as any raclette connoisseur knows, is compulsory, as the cheese is said to congeal in the stomach when consumed with water. So BYO a nice dry Riesling or, even better, a Swiss Fendant to cut through the fat. To do otherwise is to risk the dreaded raclette bloat, a fate even worse than fondue-fork fatigue syndrome.



Untitled

At the Whitney Museum of American Art
99 Gansevoort St., nr. Washington St.
no phone yet

WHEN Danny Meyer operated the restaurant at the uptown Whitney, he took inspiration from the neighborhood's landmark coffee shops for its homey, diner-inspired menu. That café's name, *Untitled*, and a Robert Indiana piece (spelling out the word EAT) are the only elements that Meyer has preserved for his new version of

Untitled, opening May 1 on the ground floor of the museum's new home. The open kitchen is now under the direction of executive chef Michael Anthony, who sees the project as an opportunity to approach seasonal American cuisine from a perspective different from that of his home base of Gramercy Tavern. At *Untitled*, Anthony and his chef de cuisine Suzanne Cupps have made a menu that reflects both the building's minimalist glass-box design and the Whitney's focus on contemporary art: Whereas Gramercy is dark, wood-beamed, and masculine, *Untitled* was designed with an emphasis on transparency and openness, intended, says Anthony, "to fuse the nature of inside and outside, so we'll be able to play that to our advantage, cooking food that is light and airy." The menu is divided into four sections, with dishes ranging from crab hush puppies to grilled monkfish with green garlic and lobster sauce

(pictured). A vegetable-forward category showcases plates like braised artichokes, and shaved asparagus with turnips and mizuna—a preview, perhaps, of Anthony's forthcoming *Vis for Vegetables* cookbook.



Rebelle

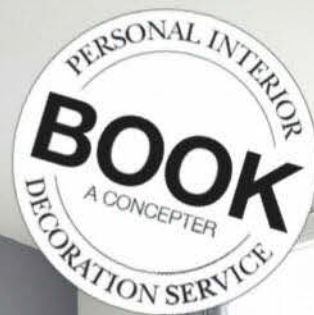
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PEARL & ASH WINE DIRECTOR
Patrick Cappiello credits Paris's "bistronomy" culture of ambitious

young chefs serving serious food in casual settings as inspiration for the Lower East Side restaurant. When he and his partners decided to expand with a second Bowery venture, they enlisted a chef who participated in the French food revolution directly: Daniel Eddy, a native New Yorker and former chef de cuisine at Paris's seminal Spring. Eddy's menu explores French classics in a modern way: Leek vinaigrette is garnished with leek ash (pictured), beet bourguignonne swaps beef for salt-baked and dehydrated roots. Desserts are the province of Jessica Yang, late of Per Se and Guy Savoy. And everything has been conceived with wine in mind—a good thing, considering the scope of Cappiello's 1,500-label French-and-American list. The design by hOmE incorporates marble, custom-crafted paintings and textiles, and an open kitchen with a chef's counter, and a bar menu offers snacks like anchovies and saucisson.

R.R. & R.P.

PHOTOGRAPHS: KATHRYN PALMIER/NEW YORK MAGAZINE



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JUAN MONTOYA
ROBIN OSLER
MILES REDD
DAVID ROCKWELL
STEVEN SCLAROFF
GHISLAINE VIÑAS
ALAN WANZENBERG
MARK ZEFF

BY WENDY
GOODMAN

SEEING A REALLY spectacular room—whether in a photograph or in person—can be a transformative, full-body experience. That is especially true when what you do for a living is design rooms; which became apparent when we asked 20 of the city's architects and designers to sift through their mental Rolodexes and—out of all the New York kitchens, living rooms, and bedrooms they'd observed throughout their long careers—land on one favorite. “It was like a dream, somehow familiar and otherworldly” is how Miles Redd describes his encounter with Oscar de la Renta's living room. Doug Meyer recalls walking into Holly

Solomon's excessively tiled kitchen and realizing for the first time that a room could be a living work of art. Many of these spaces now exist, sadly, only in memory. But others continue to inspire. When Robert Couturier is feeling glum, all he has to do is go to the Met and imagine the Duchesse de Crillon laying her head on the simple alcove bed in the museum's 18th-century period room, and he'll immediately snap out of it. And Sergio Mercado was so inspired by a photograph of Donald Judd's sparse Spring Street loft that he up and moved to New York—to become a designer. Now that loft has been restored in all its pristine minimalism and is still a beacon.



JUAN MONTOYA

PICKS

Ward Bennett's Living Room

DESIGNED BY
Ward Bennett

LOCATION
The Dakota

YEAR
Around 1965

"I first saw his apartment in the Dakota when I was a student at Parsons—I was there for a cocktail party and was taken by the clean, beautiful scale, the fact that it wasn't overly decorated, the muted colors, and perhaps, at the end, the absence of color."



**ROBERT
COUTURIER**

PICKS

A Boudoir From the Hôtel de Crillon



DESIGNED BY
**Pierre-Adrien
Paris**

LOCATION
**The Metropolitan
Museum of Art**

YEAR
Circa 1777–80

“When I feel blue, I come here and just stare. The room is very small, with one window and an alcove bed, all divinely upholstered, the woodwork perfectly decorated. But it’s the delicate atmosphere that I love. You can almost smell a faint whiff of roses and see in the pillows the forms of the woman who was resting there, simply passing the time.”



**GHISLAINE
VIÑAS**

PICKS

Betsey Johnson’s Dining Room



DESIGNED BY
Betsey Johnson

LOCATION
**Fifth Avenue,
Greenwich
Village**

YEAR
1995

“Here are two colors—a sweet pink, and a yellow with just the right amount of mustard—that are an unusual combination but work perfectly together. This room has so much spunk; it’s so feminine but with some solid masculinity. I’ve always appreciated it for balancing those qualities so well.”



MILES REDD

PICKS

Oscar de la Renta's Living Room



DESIGNED BY
**Robert Denning
& Vincent
Fourcade**

LOCATION
Upper East Side

YEAR
Circa 1980s

"Oscar famously said, 'You live in one room,' and so he gutted his apartment and turned it into a loft of sorts. The enormous space encompasses a dining room, living room, and library which spans across Park Avenue. I remember my first visit: It was right when I started working for Oscar. Seeing it for the first time felt a little like a dream, somehow familiar yet otherworldly. There is a real sense of refusal that makes you feel as if only very special and particular things were allowed in."



PHOTOGRAPHS: OBERTO GILI/CONDÉ NAST
(DE LA RENTA); PETER AARON/OTTO (PERRY)




**KELLY
BEHUN**

PICKS

Lisa Perry's
Living Room

DESIGNED BY
Tony Ingrao,
with architect
David Piscuskas

LOCATION
Sutton Place

YEAR
2002

"The grand living room, bathed in light from both sides, plus a skylight above, with a world-class view of the East River and the 59th Street bridge, plus the brilliant curved sofa and the massive Roy Lichtenstein would make even the most jaded person swoon. I asked if I could move in, and Lisa didn't understand that I wasn't kidding."



DAVID
ROCKWELL

PICKS

Donald Judd's Bedroom

DESIGNED BY
Donald Judd

LOCATION
Spring Street

YEAR
1968

"For Judd, there was no separation of life and art. He truly lived his aesthetic. The furniture, including the low platform bed, were designed and crafted by Judd. The artwork on the wall behind his bed is by him and his friends. And Dan Flavin's light sculpture transforms the sleeping area into a proscenium stage."




**SERGIO
MERCADO**

ALSO PICKS

Donald Judd's Bedroom

“Seeing photographs for the first time of the furnishings, artwork, sculpture, shape of objects and their placement, all with such intention, so carefully thought out, was so inspiring. And the scale of the rooms and the sense of space in an otherwise crowded and congested city—it was a culmination of all those elements that inspired me to move to New York.”



ELAINE GRIFFIN

PICKS

Mark & Duane Hampton's Living Room



"It's so darned groovy and just dripping with that authentic '70s flair—the Lucite cubes! The ficus!—but it's also a masterpiece in the art of combining black and white, which can be hard to do. And you can just imagine the tidy cocktail parties that happened here regularly, with Duane wearing a chic Schiaparelli shift that complemented the carpet."

DAVID
CAFIERO

PICKS

Bill Blass's Entry Hall

DESIGNED BY
**Chessey Rayner
& Mica Ertegun**

LOCATION
Sutton Place

YEAR
1990

"The first thing that really hit me and has stayed with me all these years is of course that round table. The way it anchored the room and yet allowed you to walk around it and discover all the amazing treasures that were piled up on it. Piles of books, bulbs, the staircase models. I remember lighting a Winston with a wooden match that was in a tortoiseshell box. I can still see the smoke drifting through the light of that beautiful afternoon."

DESIGNED BY
**Mark Hampton
& David Hicks**

LOCATION
East 63rd Street

YEAR
Around 1964



PHOTOGRAPHS: PIETER ESTERSONH/BILL BLASS ARCHIVES; JOHN T. HILL (HAMPTON)

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**JAY
JOHNSON**

PICKS

Andy Warhol's Living Room

DESIGNED BY
Jed Johnson

LOCATION
East 66th Street

YEAR
1977

"[My late brother] Jed and Andy moved here in 1974, and Jed finished the house in 1977. He spent hundreds of hours researching the Federalist period and tried to make the room as authentic as possible. He bought the best collection of American Federalist furniture that he could find and had the curtain-maker from the Metropolitan Museum craft the draperies. It was a room that was never used by anyone. It was like a period room at the Met. The few people that came over always stood in the doorway as if it were roped off and just looked. His house was so contrary to the image that people had of him."

ROBIN OSLER

PICKS

Tom Klinkowstein & Elizabeth Gillett's Bathroom

"This was the second project I did with Tom. We exchanged photos of planets and stills of the spaceship in The Day the Earth Stood Still. By not hiding the loft's bathroom behind walls, it was a way to get sunlight in there, allowing the bather to gaze toward the light, as if through a cloud."

DESIGNED BY
Robin Osler

LOCATION
**Hudson Street,
Tribeca**

YEAR
2001





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ZACK MCKOWN

PICKS

Paul Rudolph's Living Room



DESIGNED BY
Paul Rudolph

LOCATION
Beekman Place

YEAR
1978

"Rudolph is often described as Brutalist, but there's nothing severe or somber about the space. The thrusting I-beams, canopied walkways, and floating stairs create these beautiful social and living areas. And though the design looks so new, it really fits into the older building."



PHOTOGRAPHS: PETER AARON/OTTO (RUDOLPH);
EZRA STOLLER/ESTO (ROCKEFELLER)



RICHARD MISHAAN

PICKS

Nelson Rockefeller's Living Room

DESIGNED BY
Jean-Michel Frank

LOCATION
**Fifth Avenue,
Upper East Side**

YEAR
1934

"I was at Galerie Vallois in Paris in 1982 when I first saw a book of Jean-Michel Frank's work that featured Nelson Rockefeller's apartment. I could feel the adrenaline pumping through my body. I loved every single element—the mural painted by Léger that surrounded the fireplace mantel; the paneling on the walls that had been shaped and ornamented to frame the murals; the leather-and-cane Bergères designed by Frank. I think that ever since seeing those photos, I've understood that an art collection infused by other collectible items like limited-edition [furniture] pieces by artists creates the most complete visual impact."

MARK ZEFF

PICKS

David
McDermott &
Peter McGough's
Living Room



DESIGNED BY
**McDermott
& McGough**

LOCATION
**Broadway,
Williamsburg**

YEAR
1992

"I first went to McDermott and McGough's Brooklyn studio back when I didn't know anything about Brooklyn. It was a Thursday-night party with lots of artists from Art et Industrie and a mad group of fashion folks including Stephen Sprouse and his entourage. They would host these tea parties, as if you were in the 1920s, all dressed in clothing from that period. This place was so not the norm for the time; it felt like being in an old photograph."



DOUG MEYER

PICKS

Holly
Solomon's
Kitchen



DESIGNED BY
Doreen Gallo

LOCATION
Sutton Place

YEAR
1984

"The first time I ever walked into Holly's place, she opened the door and walked me to where I would expect there to be a classic kitchen, and instead I encountered one of the wildest site-specific works I've seen. Every freaking inch of every surface was covered in a free-for-all mishmash of tiles. Holly told me that she and her husband had had the artist Doreen Gallo create what she considered a 'painting' on the walls of the pantry and kitchen. It changed how I viewed rooms; I was able to see them as livable works of art."

PHOTOGRAPHS: PIETER ESTERSON (MCDERMOTT & MCGOUGH); JOHN M. HALL (SOLOMON)






PATRICK MELE
PICKS

Robert Isabell's Sitting Room

DESIGNED BY
Robert Isabell

LOCATION
Minetta Lane

YEAR
1990

"The stone, slate, stucco, metal, they all blend and bounce off one another beautifully. And that Johnny Swing sofa—it's like a piece of sculptural jewelry. Everything seems in harmony. The green dishes on the mantel, the green ivy creeping down outside the window. The room is transportive—you could be anywhere in the world, but you realize you're inside an artist's singular statement."





ALAN
WANZENBERG

PICKS

Dorothy Norman's Living Room



"One of its great appeals is comfort, what with all its casual and extensive seating. The room has the capacity for a large group but also provides intimacy and detail for one or two people."

DESIGNED BY
William Lescaze

LOCATION
East 70th Street

YEAR
1941



STEVEN SCLAROFF

PICKS

Amanda & Carter Burden's Drawing Room

DESIGNED BY
Carter Burden

LOCATION
The Dakota

YEAR
1965

"In the '90s, I got a copy of Vogue's Book of Houses, Gardens, People from 1968 and saw the Burdens' apartment at the Dakota for the first time. I couldn't believe that people that young lived this way, and I like that it was referred to as a 'drawing room.' I am guessing they meant it and entertained other ridiculously chic young people there. And I love the happiness of the colors—how it's so bold without being goofy."



PHOTOGRAPHS: SCOTT FRANCES/ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST/CONDÉ NAST (NORMAN); HORST/CONDÉ NAST (BURDEN)

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**FRANK
DE BIASI**

PICKS

Bunny Mellon's Dining Room

DESIGNED BY
**John Fowler
& Imogen
Taylor**

LOCATION
**East 70th
Street**

YEAR
1966

"I love those strié Prussian-blue walls, and her liberal sprinkling of over-the-top obelisks and objets by Jean Schlumberger, each jewel twinkling in the light of this bright corner room. Funnily enough, I ended up moving directly across the street, and was able to see Mrs. Mellon's home and its plane trees every day—heaven!"

DAVID EASTON

PICKS

Billy Baldwin's Studio



"You could tell that Billy had pared down his life, and everything that was in that room had a special meaning to him—and those rich dark-brown walls were so chic. I look at it today, and you could transport the room to 2015, and it would still look fantastic."

DESIGNED BY
Billy Baldwin

LOCATION
East 61st Street

YEAR
Early 1970s



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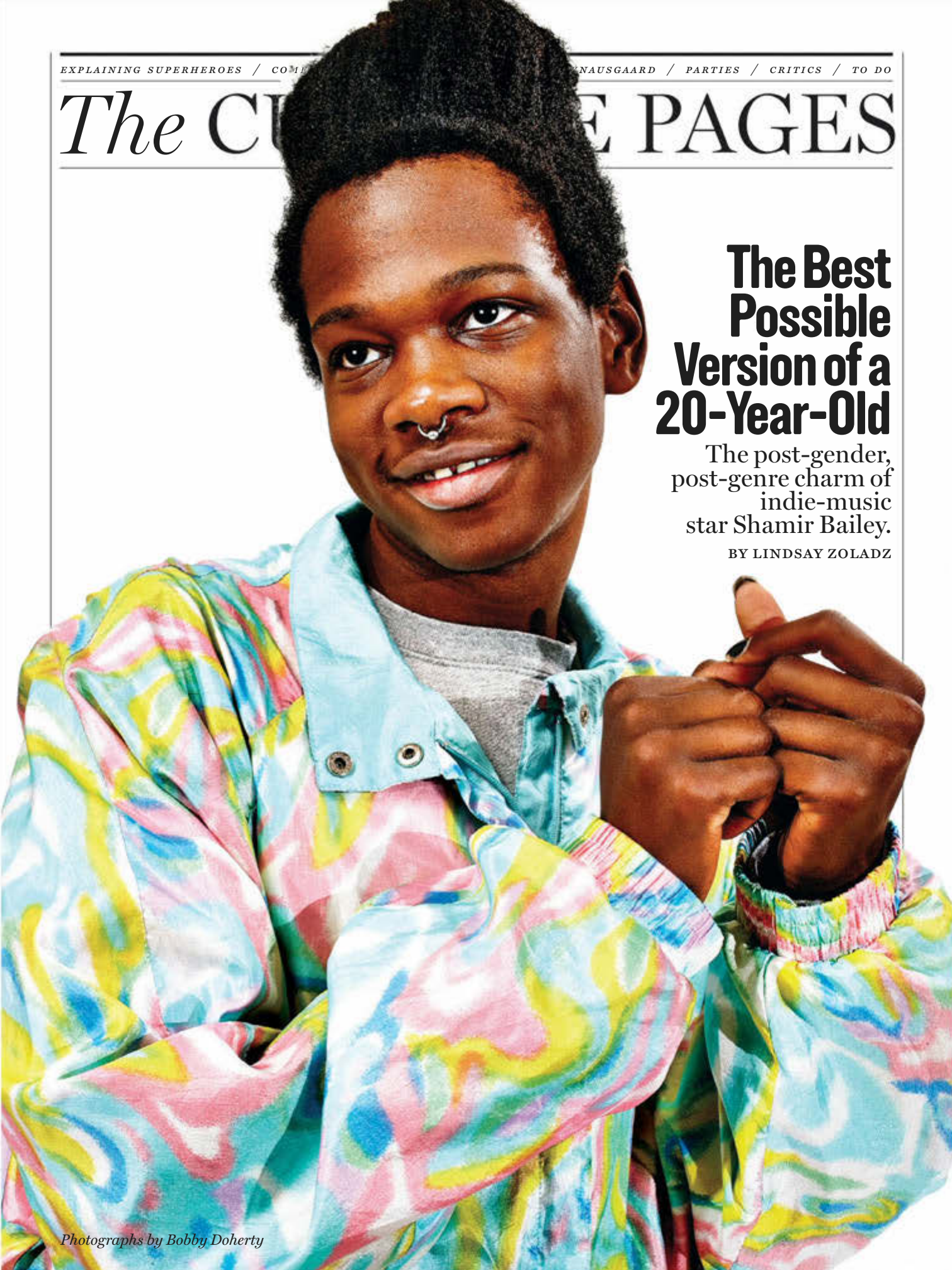
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The CULTURE PAGES

The Best Possible Version of a 20-Year-Old

The post-gender, post-genre charm of indie-music star Shamir Bailey.

BY LINDSAY ZOLADZ



MIDWAY THROUGH lunch at a divey Williamsburg Mexican joint, Shamir Bailey turned into a puppet. Well, on the internet, anyway—at some moment between the chips and guac and the lengua chimichangas, the video for his bouncy new “Call It Off” premiered online, kicking up a flurry of faves, reblogs, and a few WTFs. The clip features the charismatic 20-year-old singer undergoing a transformation from man to puppet; as he leans over the table to show me a few pictures, he brags, “I know I look good in felt.”

Bailey has just arrived in town from Austin’s SXSW, where he experienced the sort of buzz-generating week that the music festival is supposed to deliver for artists but only rarely does. The taste-making website Stereogum gushed, “I haven’t been this enthralled with a live performance [in] a while.” *Spin* dubbed him “Most Likely to Succeed” and noted that, onstage and off, “he handed out hugs like candy.” At the end of a performance at the fest’s Fader Fort, Bailey began individually greeting audience members as though they were guests at his own house party.

All of which is true to the spirit of his forthcoming debut, *Ratchet*, which is as dazzling and endearing as a handmade disco ball. The album, out May 19 on XL, the British label that helped make stars of Adele and Vampire Weekend, combines the scrappy thump of early house with the knowing sass of LCD Soundsystem. Animated by Bailey’s infectious personality, *Ratchet* revels in carefree youth and the transcendence of a great night out. “Life’s no answer, it’s just one big guess,” Bailey declares on one of the danciest tunes. “So why not go out and make a scene?”

Like his voice—a lilting falsetto reminiscent of gender-bending disco singer Sylvester and a tweenage Michael Jackson—Bailey’s look can be unapologetically androgynous. (When we met, he showed me his Lana Del Rey–inspired manicure.) That classificational blurriness sets him apart but also makes him feel of the moment. Last year, music critic Jason King grouped Bailey with Azealia Banks and Mykki Blanco (and I’d add Frank Ocean) as a part of the “post-closet black overground,” artists who flaunt their queerness but find it passé to subscribe to a label as confining as “gay.” Fittingly, Bailey says he doesn’t relate to the terms *male* or *female*—he’s “just Shamir.”

Ratchet was recorded in a basement studio on a quiet block in Williamsburg, not far from this particular Mexican restaurant, Grand Morelos. He orders his usual (“I know if a Mexican restaurant is authentic if they have lengua”) and asks the waitress for the “really, really spicy” salsa they keep in the back. She obliges; Bailey dips a chip and

exhales rapturously. “You can literally,” he says, “taste the death in it.”

On his Android, Bailey flicks through stills from the “Call It Off” video. Puppet Shamir has all the stylish singer’s signature attributes: that septum ring, that charming gap between his front teeth. The video premiered as a part of the YouTube Music Awards webcast—alongside offerings by Ed Sheeran and Charli XCX—and, accordingly, his phone buzzes every few seconds during our lunch. “Everything is popping off!” he says.

BAILEY WAS BORN and raised in Las Vegas, a half-hour north of the Strip. In conversation (and in his videos), he gives off both a neon exuberance and an ennui that probably have something to do with growing up in a town where adults go to behave

“He doesn’t relate to the terms ‘male’ or ‘female’—he’s ‘just Shamir.’”

badly. But it wasn’t just his age that made him feel out of step with his surroundings; for as long as he can remember, Bailey, the son of a real-estate-agent mom and UPS-driver dad, has struggled to conform to gender stereotypes. He remembers spending equal time with toy cars and an Easy-Bake Oven. “I never thought it was weird until people started telling me,” he says. “Then I was like, ‘Wait, I can’t braid hair and wrestle? Why?!’”

Music became an outlet for what Bailey calls his “weirdness.” He got a guitar when he was 9. As a teen, he played along to songs from Nickelodeon’s *The Naked Brothers Band*. Eventually he formed a jangly indie-pop outfit called Anorexia. After the band dissolved, he began recording solo tracks and emailed a demo to the Brooklyn indie Godmode Music.

“What jumped out to me was that his

music was super-raw,” recalls Godmode founder Nick Sylvester, who was particularly taken with the torchy “I’ll Never Be Able to Love.” “When you hear his voice saying those words, you feel the weight of it. I was like, *Wow, there’s real depth here.*” Sylvester was so impressed that he flew Bailey to New York to record an EP, *Northtown*. This past fall, after securing a residency at the Bushwick DIY space Silent Barn, Bailey returned to Brooklyn to work on *Ratchet*.

It was during that time that Bailey’s star really began to rise, thanks to his irresistible single “On the Regular.” Atop a sparse, up-tempo track, Bailey raps: “Ever since I was 8, I was attached to the mike/Wanted a guitar before I wanted a bike.” “I didn’t think I’d put that out as a single,” he says. “It was supposed to be fun—like, ‘Oh, Shamir rapping, that’s cute.’ But the response was crazy.” (After attending Bailey’s first New York headlining show, Tavi Gevinson tweeted, “do u even kno how lucky we r to live in a world in which Shamir also lives.”)

“On the Regular,” which you have now probably heard in an Android ad, celebrates and subverts rap’s history of tough-guy braggadocio—there’s something arresting about a voice as feminine as Bailey’s spitting taunts like “Don’t try me, I’m not a free sample.” But beneath the humor, the song forces you to rethink the idea that bravado must be legibly masculine to be powerful.

A few days after our lunch, I catch up with Bailey in his room at the McCarren Hotel—“Call It Off” has surpassed a million views. It’s unsurprising—he *does* look good in felt—but it means Bailey is learning that attention can have a dark side. Some of the YouTube comments on the video were so nasty that Sylvester called to make sure Bailey was okay. “My music is weird, and I’m weird,” Bailey reassured him. “Not everyone’s going to get it.”

The most common response to the video was akin to “I can’t tell if this is a guy or a girl.” But Bailey shrugs that off. “It’s nothing I haven’t heard before,” he says. The night the video premiered, he tweeted to the confused: “[T]o those who keep asking, I have no gender, no sexuality, and no fucks to give.”

“I always say he’s the best possible version of a 20-year-old,” Sylvester says with a laugh. And it’s true: Bailey feels like a millennial ideal—a model of resilience for a generation wracked by cyberbullying, blurring boundaries with a progressive abandon. But even more than retrograde attitudes, the biggest challenge Bailey may face is figuring out how to maintain that private-house-party vibe as his career explodes. Not that this—or anything—seems to worry him.

“Sometimes I feel like I’ve lived a lifetime already,” he says, reclining on his unmade bed. “So now I’m just chilling.” ■



The Superheroes Won

Cultural critic

TA-NEHISI COATES

unpacks the way comics have conquered the world.

SEVENTY-SEVEN YEARS after Superman first leapt into the American imagination, superhero stories have never been more popular (or lucrative). Comics have become a breeding ground for multibillion-dollar movie and TV franchises—including the impending blockbuster *Avengers: Age of Ultron*.¹ But why are superheroes resonating so strongly? And are they worthy of the attention? These questions are important enough to compel Ta-Nehisi Coates to take a timeout from kicking off national conversations about race and politics, don his fanboy cape, and go in search of the answers.

1. The sequel to 2012's *The Avengers* and 11th film from Marvel.



In the past decade or so, we've had this huge resurgence in superhero comics and their adaptations.

Why do you think that's happened? There were a lot of great stories being told during the '80s, and those people who were reading them are of an age now where they can make this vision. That's a big part of it. I was just reading about this:

2. The first *X-Men* movie, directed by Bryan Singer.

Marvel sold their licenses in the mid- to late '90s, and *X-Men*² came out in what, 2000? So within four or five years of them selling the licenses, you have the films. That also has something to do with it. But it's kind of by accident, right? I mean nobody

thought *Spider-Man* was going to be what *Spider-Man* was or *Blade*³ was, and everything kind of followed from that. It was almost accidental.

4. Last year's hit movie, *Captain America: The Winter Soldier*, which was deeply critical of government surveillance.

But why do you think audiences have responded so positively to these adaptations?

First of all, it's just great source material. I wasn't the biggest Captain America fan, but increas-

ingly I see him as a great character. *Winter Soldier*⁴ really got into what it meant to actually represent America. There's a way to do that in which it's just this sort of light-skinned guy who runs around with a flag, you know? But there's also opportunity for intellectual conversations.

The great questions that people have been asking at least since the '70s are: Why are comics so deeply tied to superheroes? Why are superheroes so deeply tied to comics? And, why do the medium and the genre have such an enduring marriage?



3. A half-vampire Marvel hero, played on film by Wesley Snipes, who fights full-blooded vampires.



8. Storm, born in Harlem and raised in Egypt and Kenya, was introduced in the mid '70s and has remained prominent.

Superheroes are best imagined in comic books. The union between the written word, the image, and then what your imagination has to do to connect those allows for so

5. There was an early-'70s story line in which Peter Parker's best friend, Harry, became a drug addict.

much. I always feel like when I see movies, I'm a little let down by the [digital] animation. I want to hear the voice in my head, you know?

6. The X-Men, as mutants, are often used as a metaphor for other marginalized groups, such as ethnic minorities or LGBTQ people.

When I see Bruce Banner becoming the Hulk, it's only a picture. My imagination has to do some of the work there, to impute feeling and everything. We're talking about something that's so surreal it's just not possible within the world as we know it. So that requires a form that is not so literal. Animation, movies, these could be literal—Avengers movies will always disappoint me. X-Men [movies] will always disappoint me.

That reminds me of how people complain about adapting prose novels to movies. I feel sorry for people who only know comic books through movies. I really do.

To what extent have the movies hurt superhero culture? It may have ruined X-Men. I don't know how true this is, but it's

just like all the energy has been in the Avengers world right now, in terms of Marvel, and there ain't much going on with the X-Men.

There's a sentiment lately that comics had rarely responded to the culture at large, but now they are. That's totally untrue. We had drug-addiction issues⁵ in *The Amazing Spider-Man*; the politics in *X-Men*⁶ are pretty clear.

But comics companies have started to explicitly say, "We are being more diverse and inclusive," which is much less coded than a lot of the efforts at diversity in the past. Marvel opened the doors, right?⁷ You have Storm.⁸ there's a black Iron Man in the '80s,⁹ the second X-Men generation—you have the Native American Thunderbird.¹⁰ You have heroes that look all sorts of ways. When I was a kid, I knew that superheroes were not exclusively white and male. And if you have fans who grow up with that, they reach a certain age and they expect you to go to another level. Beyond that, it costs

comic books way less than movies to do diverse things. They ain't got to worry about casting somebody who is going to bring in box office.

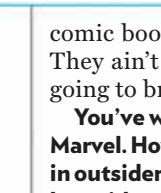
You've written in the past about the identity politics of Marvel. How do you reconcile Marvel's long-standing belief in outsider characters—people with problems, people who have identity-politics issues—with the fact that, with a handful of notable exceptions, these characters are straight and white? Comic books aren't perfect, but listen: In the 1980s, Marvel had a black woman—not just a black woman, a woman who was born in Harlem, a woman who was African-American and whose mother was Kenyan—leading their most popular title. And then

when she lost her powers, she was still kicking ass. Like she still had enough to whip Cyclops's ass. That was something they were doing. I can't really think of anywhere else I would've went at that time to see something like that. Just today I was reading that Hickman one.¹¹ And this kid, Manifold,¹² is like an Aboriginal. This is incredible! I mean this has to do with Hollywood: You don't actually see that diversity reflected on-camera. [Comics] are not perfect, especially around gender and the women's stuff,

9. Tony Stark's friend James Rhodes became Iron Man for a time. He appears in the *Iron Man* movies—played first by Terrence Howard and subsequently by Don Cheadle.



10. When the X-Men team was relaunched in the '70s, one of its members was the Native American Thunderbird. He died very quickly after his first appearance.



11. Superstar comics writer Jonathan Hickman, who currently writes *Avengers* and *New Avengers* for Marvel.



12. An Aboriginal Australian who has teleportation powers.

13. DC and Marvel have long been the two biggest players in comics and have their own separate fictional universes.



7. Marvel has often been more openly diverse than DC, although it was still long dominated by straight white male creators and characters.

but you start comparing it to Hollywood, it's not even a conversation. I mean consider it like this: There could've been [a Hollywood] adaptation, a true adaptation, of *X-Men* in which Storm was the protagonist in the way that we were reading it; that would've been a true rendering of what the comic book actually was. But that's not possible, that's not possible in Hollywood. It's deeply sad.

You are mostly a Marvel fan, but what DC stuff have you read? None. I don't know why I don't read DC.¹³ I don't even have a good argument. Here's what I'll say: For reasons right or wrong, you'll see the lead character for DC is Superman. So, truth, justice, and the American way. And, not even consciously, I just kind of said, *Hmm, maybe not*. Then you pick up *X-Men*, right, and you see all these weirdos and freaks, you know? And you think, *Oh, man, that kind of rings true for me*.

When I was a kid, I didn't even think of Peter Parker as white. It didn't even occur to me.

That's so interesting. Why didn't you think of him as white? I think that's a statement on how race is not a real thing. I acknowledge it, I think of it as living in a different world, and I can imagine a world where that was not that important; the color of his hair was just not that important. I thought of him as a dude, an outsider. But I was always aware that Superman was white, and I don't even know why.

I interviewed Brian Michael Bendis¹⁴ last year, the guy who

14. One of the all-time great superhero writers.

came up with Miles Morales.¹⁵ He said he regularly gets people of color who are comics fans saying to him that “Spider-Man is the one I identified the most with when I was a kid, because under the mask he could’ve been anybody.” You could be Spider-Man. It goes far beyond that, actually. It’s not a diversity program, it’s because they actually made a decent black character. [Bendis] really did it in a great way. When I was a kid, it never occurred to me that I wanted Peter Parker to be black. I didn’t even think about it.

What kinds of people are attracted to superhero comics? I’ve thought about what is the core thing that people are attracted to and I don’t even know. I can speak personally: On the crudest level, it was escapism. But there are all sorts of forms of escapism, so why this one? That’s a tough question to answer.

Take a step back there: What pushed you as a young man to want that escapism? Well, shit, I was living in West Baltimore. That was tough. My family’s home was not a democracy, and there was freedom in reading comic books. On top of that, these [characters] are people who had lives that meant something; Peter Parker had a mission, man. When I was young, I spent so much time thinking, *What am I doing, what’s my meaning in the world?*

Can you give me a rough outline of when you started reading and what you were reading early on? I started probably in, like, 1985 and was immediately an *Amazing Spider-Man* fan. I would dip into *Fantastic Four*. In the mid-’80s to the early ’90s, I would go to Geppi’s Comic World in Baltimore, and they had all of the new stuff, but they would have this huge collection of back issues, and I probably enjoyed the back issues more. Because exploring the backstory was the beautiful thing about comics. To make this concrete: When I started reading [*Amazing Spider-Man*], obviously, Gwen Stacy was already dead.¹⁶ And yet she was very much a live character within the books, and so going back and seeing *Oh, this happened here*, or *Here’s how this happened*, it’s like putting together a puzzle. If you read the books back then, they’d have a little asterisk¹⁷ to say this happened in issue such-and-such, and you would put this puzzle together. I probably read until the early ’90s, when I got to high school and I stopped for about ten years.

Why did you stop? I think hip-hop began to exert a stronger pull over me. It started doing something interesting. And, as it happens, Marvel started getting really bad. I came back in the middle of J. Michael Straczynski’s run

on *The Amazing Spider-Man*.¹⁸

What receptors in your brain were getting lit up by both comics and hip-hop?

They both have a fantastic element. There’s a strong argument that hip-hop dudes are either supervillains or superheroes. In fact, I wrote a piece for *The New Yorker* some years ago on this rapper MF Doom, who literally took his inspiration from Dr. Doom¹⁹ and sampled all these awkward *Fantastic Four* cartoons from back in the late ’60s, when Hanna-Barbera was doing them. So they share a lot of the same things. The difference, in terms of when I started to switch over, though, is that hip-hop is really obsessed with the culture of very, very young men, and at

that point it felt much more direct to me.

Do you, all these years later, have a sense of why Marvel spoke to you so much? I started at a very young age, doing dumb, stupid things. I can remember when I picked up a Marvel comic book—this is so shallow—you know, in the upper-left-hand corner DC just has its logo. But Marvel has who’s in the group! Like, *Fantastic Four*,²⁰ right? Or the *X-Men*. And they were rotating different people, and that was really interesting to me. They were showing off the personalities of the people in the book. Beyond that, they just spoke to my life. There was always something world-breaking about *Superman*. It just felt like too much. And then on the other end there was always something too played-out about *Batman*. *Spider-Man* immediately spoke to me. I think you just fully attach, and that’s it. That becomes where you are.

Has Marvel Unlimited²¹ ruined your work ethic? Not too much. There’s this notion about comic books that they are going to ruin you, but besides a brief spell of one year, when I was severely depressed, I haven’t found that. If anything, I read Marvel Unlimited like I consume any other piece of art. Very often, the good stuff, at least, I find very inspirational. I’m a writer, so I’m interested in the problems of storytelling, and I enjoy Marvel Unlimited in the same way when I was much younger I enjoyed poetry. It gives you a quick case study of the problems



19. One of the longest-running villains in comics, Dr. Doom is a megalomaniac scientist-sorcerer who has traditionally been an enemy of Marvel’s *Fantastic Four*.



15. An Afro-Latino American teenager who became Spider-Man in a series called *Ultimate Spider-Man*. Introduced in 2011, he has become a fan favorite.



16. In a 1973 story, the Green Goblin killed Spider-Man’s then girlfriend Gwen Stacy by tossing her off a bridge.



17. Comics often have annotations on their pages that explain references to events in past issues.

18. A much hyped period from 2001 to 2007 in which *Babylon 5* creator J. Michael Straczynski wrote *The Amazing Spider-Man*.

20. The *Fantastic Four* are Marvel’s longest running superteam, having debuted in 1961.

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of storytelling, the challenges of storytellers.

Can you give me an example of something you've read recently where you were grappling with that? I've talked about this on Twitter, but in Matt Fraction's²² *The Invincible Iron Man*,²³ the "Dark Reign"²⁴ portion of it, there's this great fight scene between Pepper Potts²⁵ and a female villain. The comic ends, and in the next issue you see the supervillain come on, and she's like, "I killed her with my bare hands." And you don't figure out until maybe an issue or two later that actually Pepper Potts dealt with the woman and had assumed her guise. It's a typical twist that you see in movies all the time these days. He was dealing with the problem of the twist. How do you get a twist in there? The great twist is the one that you didn't even know was there. [Fraction] pulled that off so, so well. In fact, I have to go back and read it a few times myself. Think about it, you know? That's how I read comic books.

You read them from a construction standpoint? I consume it in the same way I would consume any other literature. In the same way I would consume Edith Wharton, Jane Austen, or Fitzgerald. Anything else that

22. Comics writer who has risen to stardom in the past decade.



24. A 2008 9 Marvel crossover event in which supervillain Norman Osborn gained near total control of the United States and hunted down good guys.



23. Monthly comics series following the adventures of Tony Stark, a.k.a. Iron Man.



25. Tony Stark's female assistant/co-worker and occasional love interest.

I enjoy. Because for me, after I enjoy, the question is, why? What was this person doing that I liked?

And when you learn a lesson like that, about a twist, for example, does that then have an influence on your own writing? Oh, hell yeah. Even in nonfiction, if you're doing it right, you're not just transcribing information through people. You have to think about how you're going to shape things, who's your protagonist—I hate to use these crass terms—but who are you going to tell your story to, when are you going to decide to tell a certain thing. For me, the most convincing arguments always have an emotional payload. The questions about when you should deliver that payload, how you should do it, where you should put it, those are all questions of structure, how you should let the story unfurl.

Because you're somebody who publicly talks about how much you love comics, people come to you and say, "Where should I start?" What do you usually tell them? Lately, I've been telling people that *Iron Man* run during "Dark Reign." [Iron Man] has to slowly erase his brain. That's such a mind-fuck. It's great for anybody. "Kraven's Last Hunt,"²⁶ if [the reader is] old enough. These are just really good, well-told stories.

The problem for any comics reader is that there's a near-limitless amount of material that you can dive into. It's daunting, even for people who have been reading for years. How do you figure out what you're going to read next? Twitter. And before I was on Twitter I would ask people. But Twitter's a great help. You see names pop up; like 20 people telling you, you really gotta read *The Superior Foes of Spider-Man*.²⁷

Are you a fan of some of the more canonical comics that everyone always recommends? Your *Watchmen*, your *Dark Knight Returns*?²⁸ Yeah, but the problem is I have a huge Marvel bias. So I've probably read one *Batman* comic book in my life. That's the irony of this entire interview: I've ignored something like 50 percent of the greatest comic-book stories ever told.

You didn't read DC much, but you have given a shout-out to the animated series *Justice League Unlimited*²⁹ and Dwayne McDuffie. That show was incredible. Totally underrated. I mean people talk about this era of great storytelling on TV, and Emily Nussbaum wrote this great piece about why *Sex and the City* never comes up in that conversation, and I think there's a strong case for why don't *Justice League* and *Justice League Unlimited* come up in that conversation either. It's great TV. You could watch every episode of *Batman: The Animated Series*, every episode of *Superman: The Animated Series*,³⁰ and it can hold the coherent universe together in a way that is much better than—I like *The Avengers*, I'm going to go see it, but [the aforementioned shows are] much better than anything you're going to see in film.

What are you still waiting for with superheroes? Do you, as a fan, have any unfulfilled wishes? I'm still holding out that we get a Storm who looks like Storm, and that's no disrespect to Alexandra Shipp³¹ being cast. Don't let anybody think I'm criticizing her, but I hope we can get things as diverse as the books, and that one day we can start grappling with how folks actually look.



31. Actress recently cast to play a younger version of Storm in the upcoming Bryan Singer film *X-Men: Apocalypse*. She is half-black, half-Caucasian, whereas comics Storm is a very dark-skinned black woman.

26. A 1987 *Spider-Man* story line in which longtime foe Kraven sets out to destroy Spider-Man's life and reputation for good, then kills himself.



27. A very funny comics series, launched in 2013, that follows the exploits of B-list Spider-Man villains.

28. Two critically acclaimed DC series released in the mid-'80s, both of which nearly always show up in lists of the best superhero comics of all time.

29. An animated TV series, helmed by comics writer McDuffie, that ran in the middle of the 2000s and featured DC characters Superman, Batman, and Green Lantern, among others. It was, by many accounts, the greatest use of DC characters in decades.

30. Two acclaimed and successful cartoon series that were televised in the '90s.

PHOTOGRAPHS: MARVEL (POTTS, KRAVEN), PATRICK MCMULLAN (SHIPP)



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Never-Ending Story

The very public saga of Karl Ove Knausgaard.

BY CHRISTIAN LORENTZEN

LAST SPRING, Karl Ove Knausgaard came to New York to promote *Boyhood Island*, the third volume of his six-part series of autobiographical novels, *My Struggle*. The line to see him interviewed by Zadie Smith at the bookstore McNally Jackson stretched around the block, and there appeared to be a Knausgaard look-alike outside (though he might have been a stray Euro-hippie). One night later, Knausgaard spoke with Jeffrey Eugenides at the New York Public Library. He talked about some of his main themes, the undifferentiated nature of experience (“It’s completely possible to sit at home and read Heidegger and then next moment you go and do the dishes—it’s the same world”) and what happens when the body dies (“For the heart, life is simple: It beats for as long as it can. Then it stops”). Reading from his books, he stood swaying a bit like a folksinger and a bit like a graying, blue-eyed Christ.

Eugenides closed by reading from a passage about an “early puberty orgy” at the end of the third volume and asked if the episode really happened. “Yeah,” Knausgaard replied. “Norway is a wonderful country,” Eugenides said. The audiences on both nights were conspicuously full of novelists and critics, whom you don’t often see gathered in the same place, unless they’re present to talk about themselves or there’s an open bar.

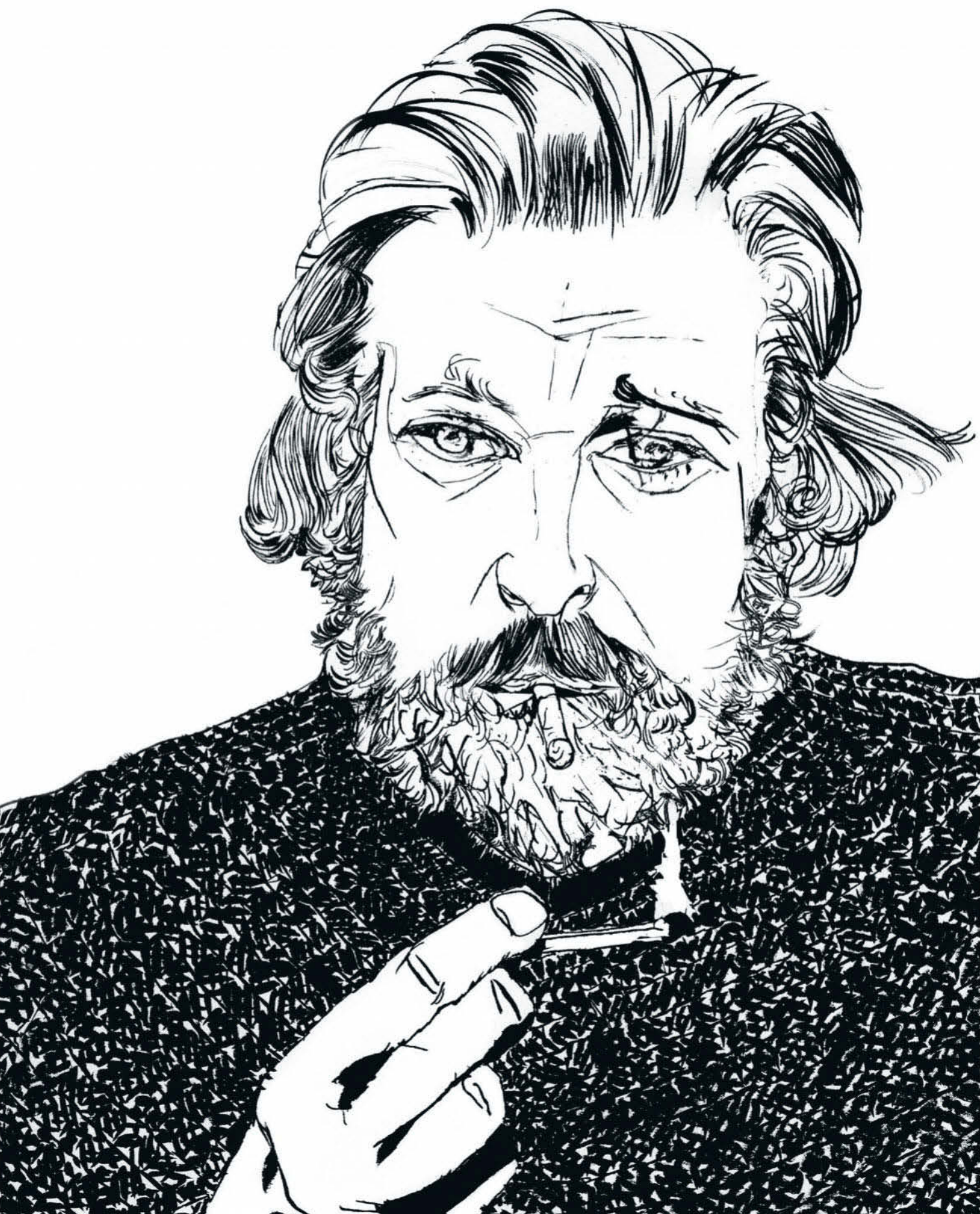
Around the same time, of course, one of the things they were talking about over their highballs was the problem with Knausgaard—or really with the people who had fallen for him. In *The Nation*, William Deresiewicz agreed with those who praised Knausgaard that the Norwegian had created an immersive world but argued it was merely a world of surfaces, and that when critics “enthroned” Knausgaard the effect is “to cede reality to the camera.” There was soon another dissent,

not to do with Knausgaard’s achievement but his popularity. On the *New York Review’s* blog, Tim Parks pointed out that for all that had been written in praise of Knausgaard in the U.S., he’d sold modestly (40,000 copies of the first two volumes by last spring, according to the *Times*, or not quite a capacity crowd at Yankee Stadium). So perhaps the hype in America around Knausgaard was that of a writer’s writer on steroids—or that of an author with a vocal faction of critical support, on the one hand, and, on the other, a cult writer whose frustrated neo-Beat romanticism attracts shaggy youngsters across state lines to queue up around the block in Nolita. (And possibly to protest: I was recently forwarded an invitation to a “Ban Knausgaard” party in Brooklyn, which might feature dartboards with the faces of Karl Ove and his champion James Wood.) Lately, Knausgaard has been overtaken in voguishness by another author of a multi-

part autobiographical epic, the pseudonymous Italian Elena Ferrante. Last month on *The New Yorker’s* website, a headline asked, “Knausgaard or Ferrante?” The comparison wasn’t all that enlightening (protagonists of both series are oppressed in their youth by “patriarchy,” but who of us isn’t?), and the question indicated that American readers might not have room in their heads for more than one trendy foreign-language novelist at a time. (Bolaño or Sebald? Murakami or Houellebecq?)

There are a lot of reasons why Knausgaard would appeal to other writers more than he might to the (mythical) average reader, some of those reasons extraliterary, including envy. In Norway, where there isn’t much of a frank autobiographical tradition, Knausgaard’s disclosures about his family caused a genuine nationwide scandal, and his sales are measured in terms of their ratio to the country’s population: one in ten. (For an American writer, equivalent success would mean selling one book to every resident of New York State, New Jersey, and Connecticut.) His struggle has been a writer’s struggle—against the shadow of his father, against the obstacles of being a father himself—and part of his triumph has been to become completely unblocked, writing at a pace of 20 pages a day, once managing 50 in a 24-hour sprint, and completing a 550-page book in eight weeks. Then there’s the audacity of taking your title from Hitler and selling out your entire family in the process (“Judas literature,” 14 of his relatives called the books in a signed public letter). Plus, he’s fiendishly photogenic and now attracts lucrative stunt assignments from the likes of *The New York Times Magazine*, which recently published his meandering two-part travelogue of North America, notable for its serial violations of journalistic code: You are not to dramatize your foul-ups with travel documents; celebrate, in the essay, the size of the check you are earning for writing it; make your photographer your main character (besides yourself); or attest to seeing nothing but homogeneous junk-space in the place you’re visiting and gaining no insights into its culture. (I hope next year they send him to Rio.)

But it’s the way Knausgaard breaks the rules of fiction that’s kept people reading for thousands of pages, that’s thrilled those who’ve praised him and irritated his detractors. In the former camp, Jonathan Lethem, Wood, Smith, Eugenides, and the rest have seen something liberating in *My Struggle*. A critic like Deresiewicz sees a disavowal of the duties of literature. Both sides are looking at the abandonment of refinement, of the burdens of fashioning plots, of psychologizing characters, of showing and not telling—of the burden of



authorial empathy itself. Reality in *My Struggle* is a matter of one thing simply happening after another. At its best it takes on a propulsion effect. The experience of reading Knausgaard is less like that of reading Proust (a frequent comparison) than of watching a recording of a great athlete, say, a basketball player, on the court. There's constant brilliance, but it's not in the nature of the game that every shot lands, and many of them don't. Not when the game is played at 20 pages a day.

Names enter and leave the narrative, often without becoming much more than names. They're people drawn from the author's memory, but through the eyes of his narrator, they can seem like figures in a landscape or animals observed on a Nordic safari. It's tempting to call Knausgaard's the art of the failure to connect, but failure implies trying, and the impression that *My Struggle* leaves is that connection is not a possibility. Or even, really, a wish. Family members are conveyed only through "character traits ... manifested." From *Volume 2: A Man in Love*:

When I think of my three children it is not only their distinctive faces that appear before me, but also the quite distinct feeling they radiate. This feeling, which is constant, is what they "are" for me. And what they "are" has been present in them ever since the first day I saw them. At that time they could barely do anything, and the little bit they could do, like sucking on a breast, raising their arms as reflex actions, looking at their surroundings, imitating, they could all do that, thus what they "are" has nothing to do with qualities, has nothing to do with what they can or can't do, but is more a kind of light that shines within them.

Whatever this is—and I think there's something beautiful about the idea and the way it's explained—it isn't empathy. The paradoxical effect is that the reader's tendency to identify with the narrator is all the more powerful. And the strange thing is that the narrator, Karl Ove—from boy to tween to teen to man to father—is no Everyman. He's a pretty fucking weird dude.

A death-obsessed misanthrope prone to phases of acute alcoholism and flights of sanity-ceding passion, one of which—after his future second wife rejects him—results in an episode of face-cutting: Does everyone who claims to *really* see themselves in this mirror? Maybe they do, maybe I do, and you can count me as one of those who's often thrilled by *My Struggle*. So it pains me (a little) to report that *Volume 4: Dancing in the Dark*—like *Boyhood Island*—is a lesser work than the first two books (though better than the third). It does display just how thoroughly Knausgaard can inhabit his previous

selves, including his most magnetically misanthropic ones, but while writers know how difficult this is to do, others may find the book too thoroughly submerged in late puberty and its humiliations. If I were in a generous mood, and could profess to any expertise in the Scandinavian canon, I might call it the great Norwegian premature-ejaculation novel.

The first such emission occurs on page 27, and after a few more episodes, the narrator stops counting them. It's risky to attempt to inhabit the mind of a 19-year-old male and to try to do so honestly. Knausgaard is always taking this risk. In *Boyhood Island*, you feel that you're inside the mind of a child, and the book's suspense derives from Karl Ove's fear that his father could lash out at him at any moment, without much cause. The first two books are told from the perspective of adulthood, with a necessarily higher level of sophistication. That Karl Ove is an intellectual who's aware that modern life requires a man with a family to make certain compromises (taking care of the children, doing some housework) but who still yearns for a heroic pre-Enlightenment sort of masculinity he knows isn't available to a member of Stockholm's polite middle class. Teenage Karl Ove isn't shy about saying he wishes he could bash a girl over the head with a club and drag her back to his cave by her hair.

Not all of Karl Ove's thoughts about sex are so hormonal and coarse. But they are unremittently adolescent. He also venerates women and imagines sex as a path to transcendence. At 19, Karl Ove is still possessed of his virginity (nothing at that tween make-out orgy went below the belt for him), and one of the book's central questions is whether and how he'll lose it. Will it be with one of the several girls he feels a true flame for, or will it go to one of the many more he encounters on his drinking binges and visits to discos? He spends a year (1987–88) as a schoolteacher in a village in northern Norway: Will he cross the line and become involved with one of his students, who are only a couple of years younger than he is and seem to be constantly turning up at his house uninvited, or play it safe with one of the few age-appropriate women in the village? Will his inexperience doom him forever? Much of the narrative is absorbed by these questions, and they're no doubt true to a certain male experience, but they're among the book's weakest parts. It's hard not to think that Knausgaard has strained the novel by being too true to his priapic younger self. (I've not mentioned masturbation: He swears he's a late starter, and still doesn't even know how.)

A little after 100 pages, time shifts back two years to the aftermath of his parents'

divorce, a flashback that continues for 250 pages. Scenes of his father's incipient alcoholism, which we know will kill him a decade on, and attempts to regain his son's affection lend the book a dose of gravity, until Dad's drunken fits of anger put Karl Ove off from coming to see him. Knausgaard does little of the frame-breaking here—the digressions and digressions within digressions, a valid reason to compare him to Proust—that set off the first two books. But there's a brief flash forward to the days after his father's death when his older brother, Yngve, discovers their father's notebooks documenting these days in terms of insomnia and its relief through

Teenage Karl Ove isn't shy about saying he wishes he could bash a girl over the head with a club and drag her back to his cave by her hair.

alcohol: "Another bad night. Always like that when you don't take any 'medicine.'" The notebooks yield a classic Knausgaard line: "We don't live our lives alone, but that doesn't mean we see those alongside whom we live our lives."

The end of *gymnas* (Norwegian for high school, basically) occasions a phase of all-out debauchery among the graduating class called *russ*, where the book builds a Kerouacian momentum as Karl Ove enters a phase of ceaseless daytime drinking and starts smoking hash. He feels little remorse when his mother kicks him out of the house one day when he stops by to get a change of clothes and cracks a six-pack of Carlsberg; for his classmates, the town has become a rotation of parties they roll up to in "the russ van," in which Karl Ove can always crash. In his own diary, he writes that these were the happiest days of his life. He soon moves north for his teaching job, and it becomes clear that his loneliness and sexual frustration are to a certain extent self-imposed: He means to become a writer. Like sex, this will be a way for him to access the sublime. The stories he writes in the early-morning hours before school, as conveyed in summary by Knausgaard, are parodically heavy with symbolism (e.g., a vision of a plain dotted with bonfires that turn out to be funeral pyres), but of course we know he succeeded at that. As the book ends, he's off to writing school. But does he ever get laid? Reader, the answer is on the penultimate page. ■

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THE JOKE THAT CHANGED MY LIFE



DAVID CROSS

Arrested Development

It was something my dad told me when I was 8. I don't remember exactly how the joke went, but the punch line was, "Not the soap, dear, radio!" But the thing was, it had nothing to do with the beginning of the joke, which was a long setup about a male lion talking to his lioness wife. I didn't get it, and my dad kept saying, "Get it?" Then, after a tortuous hour or so where I felt borderline retarded, he explained that it didn't make sense ... on purpose. It was like a trick, an anti-joke! Completely changed how I could see things.

ANDRÈS DU BOUCHET

Conan

What do you call 500 lawyers at the bottom of the ocean? Superlawyeraquaconference.

JEN KIRKMAN

Chelsea Lately

When I was about 10, I saw a Gallagher special and he said, "What's the opposite of pro-gress? Con-gress." He seemed like a very, very smart man.



MAYA RUDOLPH

The Maya Rudolph Show

There is a bear and a rabbit, and they're shitting in the woods, and the bear says to the rabbit, "Do you have a problem with shit sticking to your fur?" And the rabbit says, "No, I don't." And so the bear picks up the rabbit and he wipes himself. That's a good joke—you can change shitting to pooping, depending on your age group.



CHRIS

VANARTSDALEN

The Birthday Boys

Norm Macdonald, on *SNL*'s "Weekend Update": "Kenny G has a Christmas album out this year. Hey, happy birthday, Jesus! Hope you like crap."

BOBBY TISDALE

Due Date

It would be the first joke that I loved and repeated that I heard in fifth grade: "What do you call a fly with no wings? ... A walk." Still, to this day, so smart, simple, brilliant, and stupid at the same time.



GILBERT GOTTFRIED

Celebrity Apprentice

I like an old Henny Youngman joke, where two Jewish women are talking. One says to the other, "You see what's going on in Poland?" The other one says, "I live in the back, I don't see anything."

JONAH RAY

The Meltdown With Jonah and Kumail

My favorite of all time is an old B.J. Novak joke: "Battered women? Sounds delicious ... doesn't make it right."

LEA DELARIA

Orange Is the New Black

Jesus walks into an inn, slaps three nails on the counter, and says, "Hey, can you put me up for the night?"

Thanks largely to the internet and a devoted generation of fans, we're deep in the midst of a comedy boom. But it's easy to forget that this boom started small—with a budding funnyperson hearing a joke, seeing a show, or making someone laugh. Recently, *Vulture* polled dozens of comedians and comedy writers to find out their *aha(ha)* moments.

SEAN FITZ-GERALD



AASIF MANDVI
The Daily Show

A favorite joke that's short enough: A guy walks into a pet store, and he says, "I'd like to buy a bird." And the pet-store owner says, "Certainly, sir. Would you like a cockatoo?" And he says, "No, I just want a bird."

KEVIN ALLISON
Risk! podcast

A guy is walking down the street with a round orange head. He runs into his friend, who says, "Hey, what happened to you?" The guy says, "It's a long story. I found a genie's lamp, and I rubbed it. The genie came out and gave me three wishes. So I wished for a million dollars, and that's how I got rich. Then I asked for a beautiful woman, and that's how I met my wife." The friend says, "Wow! What was the third wish?" The guy says, "Well, that's where I think I went wrong. I asked for a round orange head."



WYATT CENAC
The Daily Show

"If you're Russian when you head to the bathroom and you're American when you leave, what are you in the bathroom? European." Even as a kindergartner, that joke made me rethink geopolitics.

KATE MICUCCI AND RIKI LINDHOME
Garfunkel and Oates
MICUCCI: "Where does a pirate keep his buccaneers? Under his buckin' hat."
LINDHOME: My favorite joke of all time is Anthony Jeselnik's: "When I finished high school, I wanted to take all my graduation money and buy myself a motorcycle. But my mom said no. See, she had a brother who died in a horrible motorcycle accident when he was 18. And I could just have his motorcycle."

AMIR BLUMENFELD
Jake and Amir

A man goes to the doctor for his annual checkup, and the doctor tells him, "You need to stop masturbating." The man asks, "Why?" The doctor replies, "Because I'm trying to examine you."



BOB SAGET
Full House

This one comes to mind off the top of my head: An elephant is in the jungle under a coconut tree, and a tiny mouse climbs up on his back and says to the elephant, "I am going to give you the best sex of your life. You okay with that?" The elephant agrees, and so the little mouse starts going at it. After a couple minutes, a coconut falls from the tree and hits the elephant hard on the head. "Ow!" he yells. To this the mouse replies, "Suffer, bitch."

LAUREN LAPKUS

Orange
Is the New Black
Pee-wee Herman saying "I know you are, but what am I?" surely changed my life for the better.



MIKE HANFORD
The Birthday Boys

I've been thinking lately about the joke in *Manhattan* where Woody Allen is in a cab with Diane Keaton, I believe, and he says, "You look so beautiful. I can hardly keep my eyes on the meter."

MAX SILVESTRI
The Feed

Greg Johnson has the best joke of all time, which is about him reading the "frequently asked questions" pamphlet at his local library. I can't do it justice, but he just repeats the question "Security in the basement?" over and over, and I have thought about this joke every day for the last nine years.

KEITH LUCAS
Lucas Bros. Moving Co.

Paul Mooney once said that James Brown looks like an old, black Chinese woman. I'm pretty sure that's the joke I love the most.

PARTY LINES

Edited by Jennifer Vineyard

PREMIERE FOR AVENGERS: AGE OF ULTRON
DOLBY THEATRE, HOLLYWOOD. APRIL 13.

“Ultron’s pain is very, very real to me. I love Ultron. I want him to crush me in his big, metal hands.”

—Joss Whedon



How do you haze new cast members?

“Is this right? Every new cast member has to have voracious sex with you?”



T.J. Miller



Zach Woods

“I mean, it’s not an explicit rule, but it’s understood.”

“Zach Woods will sort of enchant them with his eyes, draw them in, and have intercourse with them. He’s virile. It can be overwhelming.”



T.J. Miller

PREMIERE FOR SEASON TWO OF SILICON VALLEY
EL CAPITAN THEATRE, LOS ANGELES. APRIL 2.

TANGENT

“Oh my God, have I broken the law! When I came to the U.S. to get a passport, you had to be 18. I was under 18, so I said I was 19 because my parents would never have let me come. I thought they would never know, but there was a picture of me in Newsweek showing I was in New York. What?! But nobody can touch me now.”

—Iman



CINEMA SOCIETY SCREENING OF DESERT DANCER
MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
AND BACCARAT HOTEL. APRIL 7.

OPENING NIGHT OF FINDING NEVERLAND
LUNT-FONTANNE THEATRE
AND METROPOLITAN CLUB. APRIL 15.

“The worst thing about growing up? Learning that there’s no Santa Claus. Yeah, that sucked. That was awful.” —Matthew Morrison



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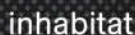
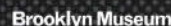
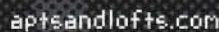
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The CULTURE PAGES

CRITICS

Jesse Green on the height of the Broadway season.

FROM LEFT:
Gigi, *Wolf Hall*, *Finding
Neverland*, *Fun Home*

THEATER / JESSE GREEN

Two Weeks, Nine Openings

The Tony-season blitz on Broadway begins.

AN AMERICAN IN PARIS

PALACE THEATRE



The curtain is already up as you arrive at *An American in Paris*; the stage is empty but for a piano. There's no overture, and, when the show starts, no dancers either, which is quite a surprise for a production that's directed by the choreographer Christopher Wheeldon and is nearly two-thirds dance. Instead, it's as quiet an opening as Broadway has

seen since *Oklahoma!* with its butter churn, and it signals the show's intention to distinguish itself in tone and pace. In that, it completely succeeds: With its odd combination of dour outlook and joyful movement, all set to a Gershwin jukebox score, it's a Broadway unicorn. But whether that success itself succeeds is another matter.

The problem is the story, which in broad outline resembles Alan Jay Lerner's screenplay for the Gene Kelly movie. Three men—Jerry Mulligan, a painter; Adam Hochberg,

a composer; and Henri Baurel, a Frenchman who dreams of becoming an American-style song-and-dance man—are, unknown to each other, vying for the affection of a Parisian dancer named Lise. But within that same framework Craig Lucas has sought to tell a much darker tale, complete with breadlines and refugees and raw memories of the war just past. His aim is to create tension beyond the question of which man will succeed with Lise. (Hint: not the Frenchman; not the Jew.) It is the success of the soul that interests Lucas: the way it does or does not survive atrocity. This rarely matches the music, though.

But when *An American in Paris* is on its feet, it's often sublime. Robert Fairchild as Jerry and Leanne Cope as Lise are beautiful and natural, and the ballet seems to release Wheeldon's richest movement ideas. This helps the stage musical avoid the movie's emotional glibness, even if at other times it

falls into some of the same traps. The great songs—and there are many—feel generic when given to characters whose main purpose is to sing them. The actors are left working very hard to make believable figures out of empty shells. Brandon Uranowitz as Adam, Vianne Cox as Henri's mother, and Jill Paice as a rich American dilettante are at least able to suggest legible profiles. Others, including the leads, seem undone by the task of creating in stillness what they manage so easily in movement.

The result is no disaster. At a time when many musicals are jackhammers, it is a delight to relax into a show with a dreamier pace, with several ideas kept airborne at once, and with singing that's mercifully free of *American Idol*-isms. Yet the songs, so re-contextualized, are also the fundamental problem. A number like "I'll Build a Stairway to Paradise" ought to be foolproof, but framed as Henri's anxious fantasy, it fails as both spectacle and drama. I rarely crave more vulgarity, but I left *An American in Paris* wondering whether it could have kicked away all those gray clouds more efficiently with a kinky boot.

FINDING NEVERLAND

LUNT-FONTANNE THEATRE

 *Finding Neverland* appears to be the true tale of how J.M. Barrie, inspired by the family of Sylvia Llewelyn Davies, created the boy who wouldn't grow up. It also appears to be a family entertainment. It's actually neither. I'm not sure which problem—historical or musical—is worse; the two are intertwined.

Part of what makes the show so frustrating is its utter falseness, only some of it grandfathered in. (The musical is based on the 2004 film of the same name, starring Johnny Depp and Kate Winslet.) Dates have been reshuffled, a child omitted, a father dispatched, and a death inserted to gin up a climax. And even the dewy movie did not claim that the relationship between Sylvia and Barrie was anything more than platonic. (But, hey, this is a musical; if you've got sexy Matthew Morrison trapped in a waistcoat and a Scots accent all evening, you've got to let him kiss someone.) What's accurate—perhaps the only thing—is that Barrie acknowledged the Davies brood as his muses for *Peter Pan*, even naming his title character for the third-born. On this foundation *Finding Neverland*, directed by Diane Paulus and with a book by James Graham, builds an enormous superstructure of trite psychology. It demonstrates about as much insight into creativity borne of loss as a Facebook memorial candle.

Even if everything in it were true, it

would still be a mess. The score, by Gary Barlow and Eliot Kennedy, known for their contributions to the British band Take That, consists of bland power ballads and charming Carnaby Street pop, all severely mismatched to the dour tone and Edwardian setting. The first song's lyrics made my ear shrivel: "There's a moment you've been waiting all your life for / When you find the very reason you're alive for." It's not just that it doesn't rhyme; it doesn't *anything*.

I was not actually surprised by how bad the writing is; I suspected that the songs would be inapt, and I half-expected the tired "fairy" jokes. But I was struck by how erratic Paulus's direction is. The designs are unsubtle, the stompy choreography overelectrified. The ensemble has a bad case of Musical Theater Disease, in which rowdy "fun" is something experienced only onstage.

Still, box-office reports suggest that she's delivered a hit. If so, that's in no small part thanks to Morrison, who sounds great and, after six years on *Glee*, knows just how to sell subpar material. Kelsey Grammer, as Barrie's producer, does his nice overplay-underplay thing. And Laura Michelle Kelly as Sylvia coughs up blood daintily while looking almost diaphanous. But hitmaking can't justify the dishonesty here. To add a happy epilogue, and to have the child Peter say of his namesake "It's the best present any boy was ever given, anywhere in the world," takes a lot of gall. The truth is that real-life Peter threw himself under a train at age 63, having long resented his role in the creation of "that terrible masterpiece." At least he was spared the prequel.

FUN HOME

CIRCLE IN THE SQUARE THEATRE

 I already thought *Fun Home* was the best new musical of the year in 2013, when it opened at the Public Theater. I have not quite seen all the current contenders, but it's hard to imagine that its Broadway transfer, and transformation, will not make it the best of this season as well. Textually, it's nearly a replica. Lisa Kron has perhaps cut or tightened a few lines of dialogue. Except for the excision of one charming but redundant little song ("Al for Short"), Jeanine Tesori has made only the kind of musical changes a fanatic would notice. *Fun Home* is still basically the story, based on Alison Bechdel's autobiographical graphic memoir, of a lesbian cartoonist trying in middle age to understand her father, who killed himself shortly after revealing to her that he, too, was gay. In 2013 I called it "hilarious and crushing," and it remains so now. Maybe less hilarious and more crushing.

The really noticeable changes are two.

One is the casting. Alison is portrayed not only at age 43, looking back on the disaster, but as a college student at 19, when it happened, and as an 9-year-old, struggling to understand why her father (and she) were different from other dads and daughters. Emily Skeggs, an understudy at the Public, now plays Medium Alison, flowering into her sexuality just as her father implodes into his. Two new actors play her brothers. But, happily, Sydney Lucas, grown a bit, returns as Small Alison, and she's sensational in what may be the most unusual part ever written for a child. In "Ring of Keys," she sings about the moment in which she senses something in common with an "old-school butch" deliverywoman at a diner. Take that, Annie Warbucks!

Under Sam Gold's direction, the actors seem as if they've been together forever and make a convincing family. Michael Cerveris and Judy Kuhn as the parents continue to give heartbreaking performances of huge and intimate scale, respectively. The only change that's meaningful is the venue. Gold has staged this version of *Fun Home* in Circle in the Square's full-round (or really full-lozenge) configuration. Instead of consisting of flat, cartoonlike tableaux as at the Public, the mise-en-scène here is more sculptural and thus more emotional.

I would have thought "more emotional" an impossibility with *Fun Home*. But just see what Gold does with the stage's traps toward the end, as pieces of the Bechdel's beautiful house go plummeting down dark holes. Even the voids are speaking: They become emblems of the impossibility of recapturing, let alone rebuilding, the past. This might be too devastating to face were it not for the fact that the re-emergence of *Fun Home* on Broadway also contradicts it.

IT SHOULDA BEEN YOU

BROOKS ATKINSON THEATRE

 With its title reminiscent of that very old standard "It Had to Be You," the new musical farce *It Shoulda Been You* sounds like a retread even before it starts, an impression furthered by a wedding plot that recalls domestic comedies like *Take Her, She's Mine* or *Mary, Mary*. Those plays—moldy even when new—were part of a genre that flourished in the 1950s and 1960s; a musical in that vein would seem to be a nonstarter now.

Indeed, *It Shoulda Been You* arrived on Broadway trailing horrible buzz. But it's not that bad, and I'm pretty sure I'm not just saying that because I know some of the creative team. It helps that its ambition is modest: It's trying to amuse, not overwhelm. Brian Hargrove's book is cleverly constructed, al-

lowing us to meet nearly all of the characters in the opening number. The bride's family is Jewish, and the groom's is anti-Semitic. The bride's older sister is overweight and under-appreciated. The best man and the maid of honor squabble. And when the bride's ex-boyfriend, who everyone wishes were the groom, shows up with a secret, the stage is set for high jinks. Then the plot gets stuck. Until we hit the plot twists!

There are two, neither very credible, and the big one, though contemporary in nature, already feels stale. Still, it's been set up well enough to produce laughs and to carry the story to its touching conclusion. This is in part the result of David Hyde Pierce's understated direction, with its emphasis on comic timing and full commitment to stock characters. In this, he is greatly aided by a luxury cast led by Tyne Daly and Harriet Harris as the sparring mothers; Daly has the rhythms of disapproval honed to a weapon ("My daughter breaks your heart and you don't have the decency to call me?"), and Harris does her dipso-wack-job shtick with panache. But it's a nice surprise to find that the real star of the show is Lisa Howard as the older sister. Howard, who played the bubbly moderator in *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, has the unusual knack of making likability theatrical, and she sings beautifully.

The songs are well placed and fulfill their little dramaturgical missions, sometimes even with lyrical élan. But there are too many of them, and the music too often sounds like the bumper cues between sitcom acts. No less an authority than Stephen Sondheim has said that farces resist singing, except as occasional respite from the action: They must, like sharks, keep moving or die. *It Shoulda Been You* doesn't die; the cast is too good for that, and a few well-placed zingers perk up the proceedings. But it's on life support.

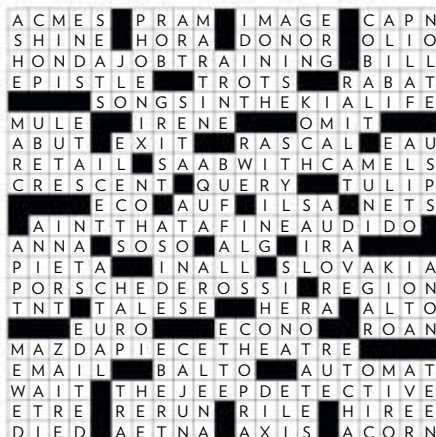
GIGI

NEIL SIMON THEATRE



A note in the *Playbill* for *Gigi* explains that the title character first appeared in a novella by "French authoress" Colette. It says everything about this misbegotten revival of the 1973 stage musical adaptation of the 1958 movie musical adaptation of the 1951 stage dramatic adaptation of the 1944 original that the producers could attach such a condescending word to one of France's greatest writers. The attempt to turn a hard-as-nails property into a girl-power fantasy, in part by casting Disney star Vanessa Hudgens as Gigi—and in part by de-perving it completely—has left it more perverted than ever.

SOLUTION TO LAST ISSUE'S PUZZLE



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IMAGE: Alvin Lustig, Upholstered Chair for Paramount Furniture, Los Angeles, 1949. Collection of Elaine Lustig Cohen. Photograph: John Halpern.



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Not that the property was so pure even before Heidi Thomas, the English dramatist credited with the new adaptation, got her hands on it. In the novella, Gigi is a pubescent girl being trained for life as a mistress to wealthy men by her grandmother Mamita and great-aunt Alicia, themselves once courtesans. Gigi is 15; Gaston, the suitor they're targeting, is 33. Thomas, here working awfully hard to fan away any possible odor of statutory rape, not only foreshortens the age gap (Gigi is now 18, Gaston apparently 25) but inanely reassigns "Thank Heaven for Little Girls" from Gaston's leering old uncle Honoré to Mamita and Alicia. Too delicious to cut, it was apparently not too delicious to ruin.

So much scrubbing leaves you with a college sexual-harassment pamphlet instead of complicated and incorrect literature. It also leaves confusion. If Gigi is 18 to start with, how much change is likely to have taken place in her? If she and Gaston are near contemporaries, where is the danger and thus the thrill?

At least there is much to admire visually. But most of the other decisions made by the creative team—the director is Eric Schaeffer—reduce rather than enhance the story. Unfortunately, that starts with the title casting. It's hard to blame Hudgens: She is way too inexperienced to have been asked to take on such a large and difficult role. Furthermore, she has not been helped by direction that emphasizes her physical awkwardness, by vocal coaching that has resulted in a coarse belt, and by diction lessons that have her sounding like Eliza Doolittle condemned to an endless performance of "The Rain in Spain." Only two performers succeed, barely, at the task of simulating reality: Corey Cott as Gaston, and (no surprise) Victoria Clark as Mamita. Only when she's in a scene is there a scene. Whether it's a scene that properly belongs to *Gigi* is moot; we must be grateful for what signs of intelligence we get.

HAND TO GOD

BOOTH THEATRE

For centuries, theatrical antiheroes have vied for attention by going to extremes, but Tyrone, in Robert Askins's *Hand to God*, may be the first, onstage at least, to bite off an earlobe. He's as violent as Sweeney Todd, as foulmouthed as a Mamet mook, with vacant eyes, limbs like linguini—and, oh, some guy's arm up his back. Yes, he's a sock puppet, and the star of Broadway's unluckiest new must-see.

But it's Jason, the repressed teen who made and presumably controls Tyrone, who has the actual problems. His father has re-

cently eaten himself to death. His overwound mother, Margery, has been channeling her mourning into a Christian puppet ministry. It is not going well. Aside from Jason, only two kids show up in their Texas church basement: Timothy, a ne'er-do-well with the hots for Margery, and Jessica, a sarcastic sophisticate on whom Jason has a crush. This is a setup for mortification—romantic, religious, and Oedipal—and when Jason can no longer reconcile obedience with emotion, Tyrone explodes out of his arm to do it for him.



Robert Fairchild in *An American in Paris*.

Askins, like Jason, is saying through a puppet something he might not be able to—surely not on Broadway—without one. Yet the metaphor is not entirely coherent. Repression is destructive, but Tyrone is destructive, too. So which is it? Askins's half-hearted resolution is provided in the mercifully short "lesson" portion of the play, in which a middle ground is suggested and a reconciliation attempted. Happily, these do not entirely erase the awkward questions Tyrone's "existence" has raised. Is there, in fact, a Tyrone separate from Jason? And: Are we what we do or what we think?

To judge from the roars of the audience, *Hand to God* is successfully disguising its concerns under the cloak of dirty puppet talk, which is somewhat belabored. But as the comedy darkens in Act Two, the tale becomes more emotionally legible, and even (in the interactions between Geneva Carr as Margery and Marc Kudisch as her pastor) heartbreaking. I don't mean to slight Sarah Stiles and Michael Oberholtzer in the supporting roles of Jessica and Timothy; both are hilarious. Nor do I mean to slight Boyer, who tosses off the challenge of playing both Jason and Jason-as-Tyrone, often in furious conversation with each other. But there is something unsatisfying in the role's construction that he cannot quite overcome. The more the

actor succeeds, the less either half of the success resonates. But if the play suffers from a similar dissipation of its energy, there is plenty left to make it irresistible.

THE KING AND I

VIVIAN BEAUMONT THEATRE

IN A SEASON littered with plays and musicals that purport to tell true stories but don't, *The King and I* is a puzzle. It is a fiction so well crafted and so profoundly emotional that it pulverizes arguments against appropriation and becomes a form of history itself. So, I think, will the latest revival; directed by Bartlett Sher and starring Kelli O'Hara and Ken Watanabe, it is too beautiful to miss. It is also, not incidentally, the best (and probably the last) installment of Lincoln Center Theater's Rodgers-and-Hammerstein-rehabilitation project, which began with *Carousel* in 1994 and continued with *South Pacific* in 2008. No jadedness could survive these excellent productions and, in particular, the strangeness, seriousness, and loveliness of what's onstage right now.

The stage is a big part of it. The Vivian Beaumont's vast deck, here extended by a thrust that covers most of the pit for most of the show, suggests the immensity of the forces at work. It also permits a delicious coup de théâtre: the arrival of Anna's ship in Bangkok. Perched at the prow, she is no Victorian violet but a bold adventurer and, if not fearless, a forbidding figure.

You may remember the events in Siam as being prettier than that. But Anna's first meetings with the prime minister and then the king are almost entirely confrontational. She is not at all deferential as she fights the king for a home outside the palace, as described in her employment contract. Much of *The King and I* is therefore a labor negotiation, and one of the hundreds of examples of Hammerstein's mastery is the way he strings individual plot elements like this into necklaces of meaning that usually become nooses. In doing so, he expands the concept of a love story to include relationships that are impossible or unconsummated, one-sided or compulsory, doomed, shared, foregone, and forsaken. And in exploring them all, Sher's production is the frankest, and sexiest, I've ever seen.

No surprise that O'Hara can handle the singing. But Anna also gives her the opportunity to dispense with the niceness that has sometimes threatened to flatten her stage persona. She has a terrific sparring partner in Watanabe, a Japanese actor best known here for *The Last Samurai*. Though he's occasionally unintelligible, I never failed to understand him, and his conception of the

king as a blend of spoiled teenager and spiritual striver made a more convincing case than I've previously experienced. The rest of the cast is excellent throughout, and the many children make the strongest case of all. Rodgers and Hammerstein knew what they were doing—yet they never quite achieved this level of complexity again. There is therefore something wonderful, yes, but also quite sad about this end-of-an-era show and its end-of-an-era revival. See it while you can, because—spoiler alert—the king dies.

SKYLIGHT

GOLDEN THEATRE; THROUGH JUNE 21

It may not at first make sense that two such fundamentally different acting styles as Bill Nighy's and Carey Mulligan's should co-exist in—and mutually enhance—one play. And yet here they are in David Hare's *Skylight*, a monkey and a moonbeam, somehow bringing the same story to thrilling life. Nighy, as will be obvious to anyone who saw *Love Actually*, is the monkey, or perhaps a Catherine wheel of tics and poses and quirks. Meanwhile, Mulligan creates the illusion of character with no affectations at all. In fact, she hardly seems to be doing anything—and then suddenly tears will fling themselves from her eyes, or a smile will rise from some depth to the surface and recede again. She is as rivetingly, radically transparent as he is hilariously baroque, but in the end that's only fitting; the play, one of Hare's best, is about what's reconcilable and what's not.

Nighy plays Tom Sergeant, a charming, magnetic London restaurateur who expanded a local business into a hospitality empire during the Thatcherite 1980s. Certainly he once magnetized Mulligan's character, Kyra Hollis, who met him when she was 18 and answered a "Waitress Wanted" notice. Though he was then already 40-ish and married, the two began a long affair, ending only when Tom's wife found out. Kyra bolted, eventually becoming a teacher in a poor neighborhood; soon after, the wife died. *Skylight* is set a year after that death, as Toryish Tom returns to rekindle things with Labourish Kyra. Indeed, the dynamics of Thatcher's England—the play is set a year after her incumbency has ended—are very much on view: "You only have to say the words *social worker* ... *probation officer* ... *counselor*," says Kyra, "for everyone in this country to sneer." The romance thus stands in for reconciliation of worldviews. If *Skylight* posits that both the romance and the reconciliation are doomed, it also dramatizes how compelling is our wish that they weren't. For such a rich entertainment—laughs, tears, flying cutlery, and

all—*Skylight* offers a rather despairing view: the piggish right wallowing in its guilt, the priggish left wallowing in its anger. Even where there is great love, Hare shows us, not everyone can get along.

WOLF HALL: PARTS 1 & 2

WINTER GARDEN THEATRE

While not by any means a musical, *Wolf Hall*, adapted by Mike Poulton from the first two books of Hilary Mantel's Cromwell trilogy, has a musical's structure and the scale to match. Its two parts take almost six hours (plus a dinner break if you see both in one day) to cover eight years in the life of Thomas Cromwell, consigliere and fixer to Henry VIII. *Part 1* (also called *Wolf Hall*) even begins with a dance: a court entertainment that introduces major players and themes. The ensuing drama, directed by Jeremy Herrin as tautly as possible, is interspersed with the equivalent of specialty numbers: jousts, hunts, investitures, pantos, and—especially in *Part 2*, subtitled *Bring Up the Bodies*—executions. Mantel's reconstructions of the gaps between the facts function much as the scenes between ABBA's songs did in *Mamma Mia!*, which played on this stage for 12 years. You might call *Wolf Hall* a historical jukebox.

All those facts, however, do not tell you how history is made at ground level by practical men like Cromwell. Ben Miles, whose only other Broadway appearance was in *The Norman Conquests*, is as convincing as the role permits. He is feral, subtle, eyes darting everywhere. When he says that the past "changes all the time," we understand that, for him, everything is fungible, even history. But for all its Realpolitik insight, this is not a play that offers much psychology. It's more of a pageant, its staging visually handsome but a little flat.

Indeed, aside from the Boleyn intrigue, there's a little-bit-of-everything flavor to the proceedings. That makes sense, and I'm not sure you could find any other way to corral Mantel's books unless you were willing to go for 60 hours instead of six. Still, I found myself wondering whether newcomers to the period might guess from the play that anything else important happened while Cromwell was serving as Henry's marriage counselor. Mostly what we have is an extremely elegant Tudor soap opera, "event theater" that fits nicely with the three-course prix fixe "proper English feast" being offered nearby at the break. There you may choose from among such menu offerings as Scotch eggs, shepherd's pie, and bubble and squeak. Venison or pheasant would be more authentic, but who has the time? ■

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To Do

The CULTURE PAGES

TWENTY-FIVE THINGS TO SEE, HEAR, WATCH, AND READ.

APRIL 22–MAY 8

POP

1. Listen to Carly Rae Jepsen's "All That"

Stellar single.

Vevo.com.

Jepsen is on a mission to shed her one-hit-wonder status, and although her perky single "I Really Like You" feels like a sequel to "Call Me Maybe," she shows off a whole new side on the dreamy, retro-cool ballad "All That," which sounds like it could've been the most-requested slow jam at the Class of '85 prom.

LINDSAY ZOLADZ

TV

2. Watch The Americans

Tip of the iceberg.

FX, April 22 at 10 p.m.

If you thought the spy drama was intense this season—with its escalation of tensions in the household and outside, capped by the Jenningses' (Matthew Rhys and Keri Russell) telling their teenage daughter, Paige (Holly Taylor), that they're Russian spies—you ain't seen nothing yet. That last phrase was a favorite of President Ronald Reagan, who labeled the former Soviet Union "the Evil Empire" in a speech that gives this episode its title: "March 8, 1983." Escalations ensue.

MATT ZOLLER SEITZ

MOVIES

3. See Ex Machina

Look for the leading lady.

In theaters.

Screenwriter Alex Garland's directorial debut fakes in the direction of sci-fi before turning into a decent, James M. Cain-like noir. See it for

26-year-old Swede Alicia Vikander as the female repository of A.I., one of the most creepily alluring creations in all sci-fi. She wanders her glorified cage like a faun, her lissome limbs transparent, wires curling along her torso in the shape of a spine. A former ballet dancer, Vikander has a lightness of tread, a lift that makes you sure the normal rules of gravity don't apply to her.

DAVID EDELSTEIN

TV

4. Watch Wolf Hall

Most excellent indeed.

PBS, Sundays at 10 p.m.

It's hard to top the overwhelming prestige of *Wolf Hall*, based on Hilary Mantel's Booker Prize-winning books: It stars Tony and Olivier winner Mark Rylance as Thomas Cromwell; it's British; even the candles seem historically crafted for excellence. But the most surprising feature of *Wolf* is its sense of humor. Part of this is in the writing, but a lot of it is thanks to Rylance and his distinguished eyebrows, adding depth and humanity to a show that could otherwise feel like TV vegetables.

MARGARET LYONS

ART

5. See Jamie Isenstein's Para Drama

An *abracadabra* sculptor.

Andrew Kreps Gallery, through May 7.

Among the most sly and squirrely artists to have emerged in some time, Isenstein has been known to pose inside walls sticking her arm through holes, holding a lighted scone as if she were a living light fixture. The works in this show (like a bed with covers that twitch, perpetually making and unmaking it) are equally uncanny, delightful, and original.

JERRY SALTZ

THEATER

6. Listen to Josh Groban

All he asks of you.

Reprise Records, April 28.

Josh Groban has never appeared in a Broadway musical, but, for a pop singer, he has an unusually theatrical voice. On his new album, *Stages*, he gives his warm baritone, big belt, and tender falsetto a workout on show tunes including the expected ("Bring Him Home"), the adventurous ("Finishing the Hat"), and the sublime ("If I Loved You," a duet with Audra McDonald).

JESSE GREEN

RADIO

7. See RadioLoveFest

Lend them your ears (and eyes).

Brooklyn Academy of Music, May 5 through 10.

The stuff podcast-fan-boy-and-girl dreams are made of: a public-radio smorgasbord including onstage renditions of "Radiolab" and "Wait Wait ... Don't Tell Me!" and an evening with NPR's Terry Gross.

THE 60-SECOND BOOK EXCERPT: 'SMASH CUT'

From Brad Gooch's memoir (Harper) of young life in New York, and his first love, filmmaker Howard Brookner.



Howard's usual complaint [to his doctor] was that she would not take enough time to explain to him what was going on, or the repercussions of all these different drugs. Usually true. But on that day, she spent time with him. He went alone into conference with her. Before closing the door, she talked with me openly. She was worried that something was wrong with his brain. The virus had crossed the brain-blood barrier, perhaps because of the lag time in his not taking AZT, which he finally agreed to take, but not until after he had finished shooting the film. A few of her patients in this state were surviving. A few were in wheelchairs. A few were blind.

I walked back into the waiting room, numbed down to a nub. Seated against a far wall was Robert Mapplethorpe, his hair silver and flowing, his face bony, with glistening gray eyes, looking like Noah Webster. He seemed very much in his element, as if this waiting room were just the next rung down from the Mineshaft, which he had articulated and repackaged with elegance. I sat next to him, and he told me that he had been taking pictures of "Jewish princesses," as he put it, for money.

BOOKS

8. Read Masha Gessen's The Brothers

Life at the cultural margins.

Riverhead.

The fearless Russian-American journalist brings equal parts sympathy and skepticism to the task of tracking the Tsarnaev family from Russia's Chechen enclaves to Cambridge and the Boston Marathon bombing.

BORIS KACHKA

DANCE

9. See Mark Morris Dance Group

Facing the music.

BAM Howard Gilman Opera House, April 22 through 26.

Morris's lively imagination has lately produced

major evening-length works, which makes these two repertory programs—with, among the selection, two local premieres and the world premiere of *Whelm*, set to Debussy—especially tantalizing.

REBECCA MILZOFF

ART

10. See Ralph Pucci: The Art of the Mannequin

No stick figures here.

Museum of Arts and Design, through August 30.

The first exhibition of Pucci's artistic collaborations over the years (with artists including Ruben and Isabel Toledo, Diane von Furstenberg, Kenny Scharf, and many more) shows precisely how the designer brilliantly transformed a ubiquitous dressmaker's form into an art piece in its own right. Every other Thursday from 6 to 8 p.m., stop by a mannequin workshop studio where, starting April 23, Michael Evert will sculpt the faces of famous Pucci collaborators; designer Mary McFadden is the first.

WENDY GOODMAN

OPERA

11. See The Rake's Progress

It's already practically gone.

Metropolitan Opera, opens May 1.

An assiduous opera lover who made a couple of ill-timed out-of-town trips could go a lifetime without seeing Stravinsky's acerbically witty

classic: a few performances (three, this time) and then it's gone, perhaps for decades. Paul Appleby leads a gold-edged cast, and the man with the stick is the opera's truest defender at the Met: James Levine.

JUSTIN DAVIDSON

MOVIES

12. See Forbidden Games

Newly restored.

Film Forum, April 24 through May 7.

No one before René Clément in his 1952 *Forbidden Games* mingled the grotesque horror of war with the comedy of innocence, and maybe no one has since. The opening—in which a little girl's parents shield her from the strafing of a German plane, and she emerges from under their bodies into a world of chaos and rubble—is so wrenching it's hard to believe where Clement goes next: to the charming story of the girl (Brigitte Fossey) and an 11-year-old boy (Georges Poujouly) as they play and watch the foolish feuds of grown-up survivors.

D.E.

TV

13. Watch Tales of the Grim Sleeper

Forensic filmmaking.

HBO, April 27 at 9 p.m.

British documentarian Nick Broomfield's chilling film, about L.A. serial murderer Lonnie Franklin Jr., is the best example of the upside of his self-consciously disarming technique. In scene after scene, Broomfield elicits astonishing

rationalizations and near shrugs from cops and neighbors, all of which add up to a portrait of how racism, class discrimination, misogyny, and even murder can start to seem normal if a community lives with them long enough.

M.Z.S.

CABARET

14. See James Monroe Iglehart

Out of the bottle.

54Below, May 4 and 18.

Iglehart won a Tony for his explosively entertaining Genie in *Aladdin* and more recently preened amusingly as Titus's arch-nemesis on *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*. He'll just be himself in his first solo show, which runs the gamut from Lionel Richie to rap; based on charisma alone, that should be enough.

BOOKS

15. Read Jo Nesbø's Blood on Snow

Piercing prose.

Knopf.

There's room in Norway's libraries for all kinds of brooders. Olav, who narrates this thriller novella, may be a shaggy blond lank with a problematic dad, but he shares little else with Karl Ove. He's a contract killer with the kind of conscience that reduces targets to "units" but rules out bank robberies as too traumatizing. He's odd, if a bit underdeveloped, but the compact-



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Gabriel A. Maher, DE SIGN (video), 2014.
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ness of this stand-alone story gives it the quick-strike force of an icicle to the heart. **B.K.**

ART

16. **See** **Twenty by Sixteen**

Bewitching boundaries.

Morgan Lehman Gallery, through May 2.

Unsung art hero Geoffrey Young is one of a handful of grassroots curators working outside New York who regularly stage amazing group shows, and he's coming to town with 40 artists' works, two 20-by-16-inch canvases apiece. The room sings with color, energy, and multiple approaches to this specific set of confines. **J.S.**



CLOSING TIME: TRIBECA FIL FESTIVAL

*Bilge Ebiri picks the films to see
before the festival ends on April 26.*

► **Wondrous Boccaccio**

The Taviani Brothers, two of Italy's greatest filmmakers, are back with a lush, powerful take on Boccaccio's *The Decameron* in a series of tales that pit individual creativity and love against mob rule, panic, and repression. (Through April 26.)

► **(T)error**

This extremely revealing documentary charts the years-long attempt by an FBI informant to bring down a suspected domestic terrorist. The filmmakers also follow the suspect himself, and something dramatically different emerges. (Through April 24.)

► **King Jack**

Coming-of-age stories setting a young boy against a neighborhood bully are a dime a dozen, but this exceptionally tense and well-acted drama achieves a compelling mixture of dreaminess and grit. (Through April 26.)

► **Gored**

The most gored bullfighter in Spain prepares for one last bout. Ido Mizrahy's sensitive doc reflects on the tension between a man's dreams of glory and his duty to his family. (Through April 25.)

► **Among the Believers**

This documentary about the notorious Red Mosque (which runs a network of jihadist madrassas in Pakistan) reveals the disturbing way that those preaching zealotry and hate can insinuate themselves into desperately poor communities. (Through April 26.)

POP

17. & 18. **Listen to** **iLoveMakonnen and Father**

Duo from the Dirty.

Livemixtapes.com; Awful Music Group.

These two Atlanta rappers are sometime collaborators; they also happen to have released two of this year's most interesting rap albums. iLoveMakonnen uses mix-tape installments like this one, *Drink More Water 5*, to stretch and hone his vocal legerdemain; on his *Who's Gonna Get Fucked First* EP, Father proves his range with piano-added beats and repurposed golden-oldies choruses.

CLASSICAL MUSIC

19. **See** **The Night Dances**

An evening of public intimacy.

Park Avenue Armory, April 22 through 26.

Sylvia Plath and Benjamin Britten's paths may never have crossed, but they were both connoisseurs of the inner life and its treacherous terrain.

Sonia Wieder Atherton performs Britten's solo cello music, interwoven with Plath's verse, read by Charlotte Rampling. J.D.

POP

20. See Bully

Flanneled fury, live.

Baby's All Right, April 29.

The forthcoming debut from grungy Nashville four-piece Bully kind of sounds like a female-fronted *In Utero*—which is no coincidence, given that front woman—producer Alicia Bognanno once interned at Steve Albini's studio. L.Z.

ART

21. See Barbara Kasten

Not just black and white.

Bortolami Gallery, through May 2.

Kasten's geometric photos use everyday materials in disorienting ways to startling effect—and for the first time in years, she's working in color.

THEATER

22. See Trash Cuisine

Food for thought.

La MaMa, April 25 through May 17.

Banned in its own country, Belarus Free Theatre reunites in exile for an exploration of capital punishment (and national foodways) in Europe, where only one country still permits the death penalty. Guess which one. J.G.

COMEDY

23. See Big Terrific

Farewell, funnies.

Warsaw, April 26.

For the past seven years, this weekly stand-up night was the best place to catch both oddball up-and-comer comedy talent and surprise sets from big names like Aziz Ansari. As hosts Jenny Slate, Gabe Liedman, and Max Silvestri move on to greener pastures, they're throwing a farewell show with pal Joe Mande and surprise (probably very famous) guests.

CLASSICAL MUSIC

24. Hear New World Symphony

Welcome visitors.

Carnegie Hall, April 28.

Michael Tilson Thomas's Miami Beach-based training orchestra regularly outplays the pros. The hyperprofessional Anne-Sofie Mutter joins them for a two-concerto program: her standby Berg and Norbert Moret's *En Rêve*, plus some Schubert and Debussy. J.D.

THEATER

25. See Emily Climbs (Machine Méchant)

Singing and sci-fi!

The Brick, through May 2.

A high-style, far-future fantasia about the handmaiden to the most powerful woman in the world—as told by the handmaiden's three clones. With suitably futurist music by Obie winner Heather Christian.

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FAMILY LAW PRACTITIONERS 2015

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Families are at the heart of the New York Area's population and in many cases are the driving motivation behind the workforce, education and community involvement. In good times and challenging ones, attorneys may be needed to help navigate through the complexities of unions and dissolutions, estate planning, visitation rights, domestic relations and family businesses.

This section highlights the abilities of some of the Tri-State's prestigious family law practitioners. Their skills and successes are detailed within these pages, and like every family, each firm and attorney has a unique and inspiring story.

Visit nymag.com/nymag/advertorial/familylaw to see their online profiles.

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COHEN RABIN STINE SCHUMANN LLP



Standing, left to right: Lindsay Pfeffer, Paul C. Kurland, Evridiki Poupouridis, Robert Pagano, Amanda Laird Creggan, Tim James, Laura Tucker
Seated, left to right: Martha Cohen Stine, Harriet Newman Cohen, Bonnie E. Rabin, Gretchen Beall Schumann

Cohen Rabin Stine Schumann LLP is a full-service matrimonial, family law and litigation law firm, established to provide the most committed and personal legal service to clients (men and women in equal numbers) in a wide range of domestic relations and family law matters. All of the firm's partners have been designated SuperLawyers and virtually all have been awarded AV Preeminent® ratings by Martindale Hubbell; the firm's associates have also consistently been named SuperLawyers.

The firm's attorneys are all excellent and committed negotiators and trial attorneys, with extensive experience in all aspects of family law and litigation. They represent their clients in contested trials as well as

in amicable settlements, tailoring particularized strategies to the needs of each of their individual clients. The firm also specializes in prenuptial agreements, post-divorce issues, the representation of same sex couples and Hague Convention cases. The firm's lawyers have represented many high profile clients and are sensitive to their needs. They have been responsible for cutting edge, landmark decisions, for which they are recognized and cited.

The firm's attorneys play leadership roles in New York's bar associations, and have earned the respect of the Judges and other court officials before whom they practice as well as of their clients, their adversaries, the professional community and the media for their integrity, careful preparation, attention to detail, commitment to their clients, advocacy and their contributions to the growth and reform of the law.

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LAW OFFICES OF ANTHONY A. CAPETOLA

FAMILY LAW, CRIMINAL & CIVIL LITIGATION

The Law Offices of Anthony A. Capetola is one of the premier firms in Long Island and New York City for family law, corporate law, civil litigation, and criminal defense. Led by experienced trial attorney Anthony A. Capetola, the firm provides clients with committed service and skilled crisis management.

"Clients know that they can rely upon us to achieve the best possible results," says Capetola. "A former client recently emailed me saying, 'I wanted to express my deep thanks to you and your office for providing me with such great service. I experienced great professionalism, smart decisions, respect and great service from each and every colleague of yours.' That's the result we strive for with each and every client."

With more than 43 years of trial experience, Mr. Capetola focused his practice on matrimonial law since 1985. Along with his associates, he has been recognized as being among the finest family law practitioners in Nassau, Suffolk, and New York Counties, and is often sought out to handle complex custody and visitation matters, having tried international custody cases pursuant to the Hague Convention.

"I have tried hundreds of cases, as an assistant prosecutor and in private practice. No challenge is too great, we cannot be intimidated and we often shine when the odds are against us," says Capetola.

In praising Anthony Capetola for his superior legal prowess, a New York Supreme Court justice recently stated: "The plaintiff's attorney, Anthony Capetola, Esq. represented his client with skill and professionalism. Mr. Capetola is a practiced and competent attorney. He is one of the principals in a highly respected law firm and appears on matrimonial cases on behalf of the firm's clients on a regular basis. He has successfully tried or negotiated numerous cases before this Court. He enjoys a superior reputation in the legal community in the area of matrimonial law."

More than just a litigator, Capetola is highly sought after to share his knowledge with others, having lectured extensively at various law schools and bar associations. He is a member of the Nassau County, New York State, and American Bar Associations. He has been included in Super Lawyers since 2010, and recognized as one of the area's top matrimonial attorneys by *Long Island Pulse Magazine*.

In addition to running a successful law practice, Mr. Capetola has also achieved recognition as a boxing promoter, real estate developer, restaurateur and community activist. When not engaged in the practice of law, he can often be found at The Carlton, a high-end Long Island restaurant and catering facility that he opened in 1995.

"Being a seasoned entrepreneur, it's second nature to me to weigh all potential benefits when deciding which course of action to take in a litigation. Recognizing that our actions are likely to have a lasting impact on a client's life well beyond whether they win or lose their case, our approach is more of a holistic one," he says. "We seek to situate clients on a path that will yield long-term benefits for them once we are no longer representing them."

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Esther Schonfeld

ESTHER SCHONFELD, ESQ SCHONFELD & GOLDRING, LLP

The law offices of SCHONFELD & GOLDRING, LLP is a widely respected boutique law firm consisting of highly skilled divorce, matrimonial and family law attorneys. All of the attorneys at S&G possess a keen understanding of the complexity of the divorce process, along with the issues associated with high profile cases, high-net-worth cases, business valuations, out-of-state custody proceedings, parental access, grandparents visitation, post divorce litigation and prenuptial agreements.

Esther Schonfeld (pictured) and Aliza Goldring, the founding partners of S&G, have specialized experience in all aspects of the divorce processes from litigation and appeals to mediation and collaborative law. S&G also frequently appears in Rabbinical Courts litigating contested matrimonial actions, and have extensive experience with the "Get Law."

S&G has a supportive, professional and specialized legal team dedicated to achieving the client's goal. "We treat each and every client with a high level of respect and compassion. We strive to get them through very challenging times in their lives with emphasis on maintaining as much financial and emotional stability as possible," says Schonfeld.

This year, Schonfeld & Goldring, LLP enjoyed several notable events. In December, Esther Schonfeld, together with one of her associates, Rachel Marks, were invited to lecture about domestic abuse as it relates to divorce matters at a groundbreaking 3 day international conference in Jerusalem, Israel, entitled, "The Jewish Community Confronts Violence and Abuse." The conference was attended by over 500 esteemed professionals from around the world.

In February of this year, Schonfeld & Goldring hosted a special private screening of the 2015 Golden Globe nominated Foreign Film, "GETT, The Trial of Viviane Amsalem," the story of a woman's struggle to divorce a husband who refuses to grant her a divorce. The event was a huge success; it was a full house, sold out event with all proceeds going to charity.

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My mission is to help couples and individuals smooth the course of divorce and separation, and provide a unique resource to address associated family issues and to minimize financial costs. We create and maintain an atmosphere of understanding, respect, honesty and fairness among all participants, allowing our clients to face a future with dignity, self-respect, and renewed hope.



TERESA OMBRES
Graduate of Fordham University and New York Law School and was among the first group of lawyers and mediators in New York to be trained in Collaborative Divorce.

Board of Directors of the New York Association of Collaborative Professionals; Founding Member and Treasurer of the New York Chapter of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (AFCC-NY); Former adjunct professor at St. John's University School of Law and a frequent lecturer at law schools, bar associations and professional organizations.

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Jay R. Buttermann and Deborah B. Kahn are pleased to announce the relocation of their AV rated® firm to Kips Bay. The firm has over two decades of high quality service to New York families and businesses. Now located in a 19th Century townhouse, the firm is recognized for its work in matrimonial and family law. Mr. Buttermann and Ms. Kahn cover the spectrum of family law, addressing not only negotiated and litigated divorce, custody and support matters, but also prenuptial and post-nuptial agreements. In child custody matters, the firm is experienced in crafting and concluding appropriate and humane resolutions in difficult and emotionally charged matters, whether by agreement or through the courts. Mr. Buttermann and Ms. Kahn have been lead counsel in trials concerning every aspect of matrimonial law, including complex distribution of assets, child custody, paternity and international matrimonial issues.

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LAW OFFICES OF JAMES J. SEXTON, PC

FAMILY AND MATRIMONIAL LAW

**"Responsive." "Dedicated."
"Aggressive." "100% Ready."**

These are the adjectives past clients of Law Offices of James J. Sexton, P.C. use to describe the firm's approach to solving even the most complex and contentious New York divorces.

The firm's Founding Partner, James J. Sexton, is no stranger to high pressure situations. For years Sexton has trained and competed in mixed martial arts and Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu in the U.S. and abroad, activities that have sharpened the divorce attorney's focus, competitive instincts and ability to react quickly under stressful conditions. Sexton and his hand picked team of Associate Attorneys and paralegals (whom he affectionately refers to as the "War Machine") work on all range of family law matters: from divorce litigation, custody hearings and child support issues to simple uncontested divorces and prenuptial agreements.

"Miyamoto Musashi, the famous 14th century Samurai and swordsman said that the ultimate aim of training in the art of combat is never having to fight" says Sexton. "We take a simple approach here. If your case can be resolved fairly by negotiations and settlement we can and will make it happen. But if the other side wants a fight they know, immediately, that they are stepping into the ring with experienced adversaries and should feel vulnerable."

"We like to call it 'peace through superior firepower,'" says Colin Dunnigan, the firm's Senior Associate and Sexton's "right hand" in litigation. "We've worked hard to establish a reputation as litigators that, in and of itself, causes the other side to take pause and consider early settlement."

This is the second year that Sexton and his team have been included among New York's top Family Law Practitioners and the past year has been a period of tremendous growth for the firm. When it was founded in 2001 Sexton's firm had one lawyer, one computer, a rented copier, and a part-time secretary. In the decade that followed Sexton's firm, and his reputation among the bench and bar, grew into a force to be reckoned in the competitive and often chaotic world of New York divorce law. In 2015 the firm expanded both its Rockland and Manhattan offices, moving from the

"We like to call it 'peace through superior firepower.' We've worked hard to establish a reputation as litigators that, in and of itself, causes the other side to take pause and consider early settlement."



James J. Sexton

East Side to a newly renovated location in Hell's Kitchen.

A self described "iconoclast" Sexton is lauded by some as a "compassionate advocate" and others as a "court room gunslinger." His reputation as a skilled trial lawyer has earned him respect in the family law community. An active member of the Family Law Section of the New York State Bar Association, as well as the Legislative Committee of same, Sexton works tirelessly to hone his skills and help draft revisions to the laws that govern divorce and custody issues.

From high net worth executives to schoolteachers Sexton's team strives to give each client the individual attention and responsive communication they deserve and should demand. "I don't care

if I'm working on a multi-million dollar divorce for an entertainment professional or a simple child support case for a Police Officer," says Sexton, "My clients are my priority and know that their case is important to me." "Whether I'm in a courtroom or at the negotiating table," Sexton says, "I think best on my feet and take a proactive approach to the 'chess match' of any family law case."

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NATASHA MEYERS, ESQ. **THE MEYERS LAW GROUP, PC.**

The Meyers Law Group, P.C. is a boutique matrimonial firm located in Huntington, New York. The firm handles divorce and family law matters in Suffolk County, Nassau County, Queens, Brooklyn and New York City.

Natasha Meyers is recognized as a talented trial attorney as well as a skilled negotiator dedicated to representing families in matters including highly contested divorces, maintenance, custody disputes, child support and visitation matters as well as pre-nuptial and post-nuptial agreements. Ms. Meyers works closely with experts so she can skillfully represent entrepreneurs and professionals involved in high net worth divorces, complex equitable distribution and support matters, as well as highly contested child custody proceedings. "Handling a highly contested divorce or custody matter requires skill, experience and being resolution oriented" says Ms. Meyers. "In my practice, I see great people at their worst. My role is to counsel and advise my clients on the law while listening to their specific needs so I can help bring their case to a prompt resolution either in the courtroom or

in a negotiated settlement and avoid unnecessary acrimony at a time when emotions can get the best of people."

Natasha Meyers works one on one with all of her clients, providing each client with individual attention tailored to meet their specific needs and providing them the highest standard of legal representation. Not all cases belong in a courtroom and most cases can be resolved out of Court, however, Natasha Meyers is known for her aggressive and effective representation in the courtroom.

Natasha Meyers is a member of the Suffolk County Bar Association, Nassau Bar Association, Suffolk County Women's Bar Association, New York State Bar Association, American Bar Association, Women's Bar Association of the State of New York, American Trial Lawyers Association of America, a member, secretary and past trustee of the Huntington Lawyers Club and a member of the New York State Academy of Trial Lawyers. She is a Certified Divorce Mediator and she also participates in the St. Patrick's legal program in Huntington, which provides free legal services to the indigent.

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Stella Grossman

Natasha Meyers



LAW OFFICE OF **JEROME A. SCHAROFF** **NY MATRIMONIAL & FAMILY LAW FIRM**

Since Mr. Scharoff opened his own firm, he has emerged as one of the Metropolitan Area's leading independent matrimonial lawyers. Mr. Scharoff is well-liked and respected by Judges and Lawyers alike. Mr. Scharoff is a member of the Nassau Bar Association Matrimonial Committee and sits on the board of WE CARE, a charity arm of the Nassau Bar Association. Mr. Scharoff has handled complex cases in the areas of child custody, child support and maintenance/alimony. In addition, he routinely handles cases involving sophisticated equitable distribution issues such as business/ license valuations and pension/retirement issues. Further, Mr. Scharoff regularly represents clients in post-divorce litigation as well as drafting complex pre-nuptial and post-nuptial agreements.

"I try to think outside the box to come up with the most constructive and cost-effective approach to litigation. I never want a client to spend more in legal fees than the dollar amount they are fighting over," Mr. Scharoff says. "However, there are some areas that you cannot put a price tag on, such as child custody matters. My goal is to assist all my clients through one of the most difficult times in their lives with strong, dedicated representation."

JEROME A. SCHAROFF, P.C.

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JOHN P. DIMASCIO, SR. **JOHN P. DIMASCIO, JR.**



A Navy veteran, John DiMascio completed his law school education while a State Court Officer. He established a law firm specializing in all aspects of Family Law in 1984 which evolved into DiMascio & Associates, LLP, a partnership with his son, John P. DiMascio, Jr. Mr. DiMascio is a Fellow of the American Bar Foundation, a Barrister of the Inns of Court, a former Chair of the Matrimonial Law Committee of the Nassau Bar, AV® peer rated by Martindale-Hubbell®, and listed in the Bar Registrar of Preeminent Lawyers.

John P. DiMascio, Jr. is the Chair of the Nassau County Bar's Matrimonial Committee. In 2006, Mr. DiMascio, Jr. received the Juris Seritus Award from the Court Officer's Benevolent Association of Nassau County. Mr. DiMascio, Jr. is a commentator for the New York Law Journal, Newsday and New York Post, and has published articles for the Family Law Review of the State Bar Association. Mr. DiMascio, Jr. has lectured at Continuing Legal Education seminars for the State Bar Association, National Business Institute, and Nassau County Bar Association.

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BENDER ROSENTHAL & RICHTER LLP



Left to right: Salvatore Scibetta, Aimee L. Richter, Susan L. Bender, Karen B. Rosenthal, Lauren Crane, Jennifer Sundt, Michael Etzrodt

Bender Rosenthal & Richter LLP is one of New York's foremost matrimonial law firms. It has been ranked Tier 1 in New York City for family law by *U.S. News – Best Lawyers* "Best Law Firm." Members have been AV Preeminent® rated by Martindale-Hubbell® and named in *The Best Lawyers in America* and *Super Lawyers*.

"We help each individual client navigate a confusing time," says Susan L. Bender, a consummate trial lawyer and a Fellow of the American College of Family Trial Lawyers and American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers. "Legal family disputes are emotionally high-stake battles since money, children, and relationships are involved."

Attention to our clients and superior knowledge of the law is what sets us apart from other firms."

As a full-service matrimonial law firm that represents high-net-worth individuals, Bender Rosenthal & Richter LLP offers expertise in intricate financial matters and complex business transactions. The firm is at the top of its field in settling or litigating child custody/visitation cases with concomitant issues of addiction, parental alienation, mental health disorders, and child developmental needs. The firm is well versed in Jewish religious divorces and same-sex partnership and marriage dissolutions.

"We are committed to providing clients with skilled and compassionate representation, particularly when appointed by the courts as the Attorney for Children," notes Karen B. Rosenthal, the current New York State Chapter Co-President of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts. "We zealously advocate for our clients and can boast of unparalleled success in cutting-edge divorce issues."

"Our goal is to help clients through the divorce process quickly and with their dignity intact," says Aimee L. Richter, who is slated to become President of the Brooklyn Bar Association in 2017. "We are honest with our clients and colleagues; consequently, our reputation for integrity follows us into the courtroom."

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ELLEN B. HOLTZMAN

A Leader in Matrimonial and Family Law

Ellen Holtzman's law practice has earned a reputation for success in all aspects of family law, from pre- and post-nuptial agreements, divorce and major asset distribution, child support cases to child relocation actions, and grandparents' rights. Ellen also takes on more complex cases, such as interstate child custody disputes, parental kidnapping, and cases involving domestic violence. Ellen builds relationships of trust with each client, understanding their priorities and concerns, and advocating persuasively and effectively on their behalf, whether at the negotiating table or in the courtroom. Several of Ellen's trials have set

legal precedents in New York, and she is known for her success in the Appellate Court as well.

Of course, Ellen's goal is always to help her clients resolve their cases out of court and, wherever possible, she advises her clients to avoid the cost and acrimony of a trial. She and Meryl Neuren, her skilled associate, are experienced in the collaborative law divorce process, a popular alternative for couples who agree to divorce without litigation. Ellen devotes time to advancing her profession, too. She is a past president of the Women's Bar Association of the State of New York, and currently serves as a Commissioner on the New York State Legislative Ethics Commission.

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Saltzman Chetkof & Rosenberg LLP is determined to obtain the maximum results whether by way of creative settlement or litigation, with a commitment to treat clients with compassion and respect, and permitting our clients to leave the family law process with their dignity intact. Saltzman Chetkof & Rosenberg LLP is listed among U.S. News & World Report's "Best Lawyers" as a Tier I law firm in Family Law.

Partner, Michael Chetkof, a well respected trial litigator, continues to be selected as a New York "Super Lawyer" in family law and is "AV Preeminent" peer-review rated by Martindale-Hubbell®, the highest available for legal ability and ethics. Michael is also trained in Collaborative Law and serves as a Court Examiner in Guardianship matters. He is a member of the New York State Trial Lawyers Association, the New York State Bar Association Family Law Section, and the Matrimonial Law Committees of the Nassau and Suffolk County Bar Associations.

Partner, Lee Rosenberg, is a Fellow of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers who also serves on the executive committee of the NY State Bar Association's Family Law Section. Former Chair of the Nassau County Bar Association Matrimonial Law Committee, Lee is a litigator and appellate counsel who continues to be listed in "Best Lawyers in America", and as a New York "Super Lawyer" in family law. He is "AV Preeminent" peer-rated by Martindale-Hubbell®. Lee was also trained in divorce mediation and serves as the Editor-in-Chief of the NY State Bar Association's "Family Law Review".

Senior Associate, Allyson D. Burger, is a Super Lawyer "Rising Star", who previously worked for several well-known boutique matrimonial firms in Manhattan and on Long Island assisting in all aspects of matrimonial and family law including high net worth cases and on father's rights, domestic violence and same-sex relationship issues. Ally is an active member of several bar associations on the national, state, and local levels. She has also been published as an author in the New York State Bar Association's Family Law Review.



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Cobert, Haber & Haber

Amy Cobert Haber is one of the founding partners in the prestigious law firm of Cobert, Haber & Haber.

Ms. Haber, along with her team of experienced lawyers, has been practicing Matrimonial and Family Law for more than thirty years. The firm represents women and men, mothers and fathers. Gone are the days when it is presumed that the mother shall be the custodial parent and the father will be relegated to visiting every other weekend with a mid-week dinner.

While the most optimal outcome for any case is that the parents share custody of the children, sometimes circumstances, and the facts, don't lend themselves to that ideal outcome. Ms. Haber has extensive experience litigating challenging custody cases and maximizing her clients' chances for a successful result working as a team to formulate the best strategy.

In addition to custody and visitation, the law firm of Cobert Haber & Haber handles every aspect of divorce cases such as equitable distribution, which can often be complex, especially when businesses are family owned, and successfully works with financial evaluators and forensic accountants to protect our clients' interests. We also represent clients in pre and post nuptial agreements, relocation matters and defend clients against allegations of domestic violence.

Every client is special to us. Contact us and we will give you the special attention that you deserve.



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ABRAMS FENSTERMAN



*Seated, from left: Steven Eisman, Samuel Ferrara
Standing from left: Adina Phillips, Jill Goffer, Michael Ratner, Andrea Brodie, Hilary Simon, Daniel Smith*

Abrams Fensterman, a full-service law firm serving clients throughout New York with offices in Lake Success, New York City, Brooklyn and Rochester, boasts expertise encompassing a comprehensive scope of practice areas. The firm has established a distinguished matrimonial and family law department with two Fellows of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers and AV Preeminent® rated Martindale-Hubbell® executive partners at its helm - Steven Eisman and Samuel Ferrara.

Eisman, a veteran trial attorney and President-Elect of the Nassau County Bar Association, has been named in *New York Super Lawyers* since 2008.

Ferrara, also named in *New York Super Lawyers* since 2008, has particular experience with contested custody and high net-worth cases and has been recognized as one of the "Top 10 Divorce Law Attorneys Age 45 & Under in Long Island" by *Ten Leuders*.

Partner, Michael Ratner has been recently named in *New York Super Lawyers* and Associates, Andrea Brodie and Daniel Smith, have been designated by *Super Lawyers* as "Rising Stars" for 2014. Smith was also honored by the *Long Island Business News* at their annual Leadership in Law Awards in November 2014.

Associate, Hilary Simon, a Child and Family Advocacy Fellow, received the

citation of Excellence in Family Law at the Hofstra University School of Law. Associate, Jill Goffer, having practiced for over a decade, is a former member of the executive matrimonial committee of the New York City Bar Association. Paralegal, Adina Phillips, has several years of Family Law-centric experience and is pursuing a Juris Doctorate on scholarship at St. John's University School of Law.

Both Eisman and Ferrara are frequent lecturers at law schools and bar associations on varying topics of interest to matrimonial and family law practitioners. Ferrara also teaches at the Hofstra University School of Law.

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Chemtob Moss & Forman, LLP

Chemtob Moss & Forman, LLP is a vibrant, aggressive boutique matrimonial and family law firm located in midtown Manhattan. The firm, which concentrates its practice in divorce litigation, custody litigation, prenuptial agreements, separation agreements, paternity issues, post-judgment litigation, and visitation disputes, has quickly become one of the largest matrimonial law firms in New York City.



Left to right: Charlotte Morgan, Mudita Chawla, Michael Beyda, Nancy Chemtob, Joshua Forman, Susan Moss, Andrew Elliot, Jeremy Bethel, Marcy Katz, and Alexis Wolf

The firm was founded in 2002 by a group of rising stars in matrimonial law who had previously practiced at large corporate firms. Their experience in overseeing intricate financial issues has proven invaluable in cases that involve complicated marital estates. Over the years, the firm's diligent attorneys have striven to reduce the stress of the legal process for clients by providing skilled and passionate advocacy. Together they have handled the splits of high-profile Hollywood players, hedge fund managers and business owners. They also provided representation for one of the first divorces of a same-sex couple in New York. Partner Nancy Chemtob says of the firm's attorneys: "We are all in our professional prime—we are young and open enough to recognize creative new solutions, while having a great deal of energy and love for what we do."

The firm's attorneys successfully guide clients through what are often emotionally charged disputes by immediately identifying a client's goals and mapping out a comprehensive strategy to achieve them. While the firm believes that thoroughly negotiated settlements are generally in a client's best interest, they are known for providing aggressive and effective representation at all trial and appellate levels. "If a case cannot settle," says partner Susan Moss, "our client can be assured that we have the experience and intelligence to achieve their goals in the courtroom."

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MARTIN FRIEDLANDER, PC.



We are a New York City boutique firm specializing in all areas of Matrimonial and Family Law.

Founding partner, Martin E. Friedlander, and qualified hand selected associates specialize in every branch of family law from prenuptial agreements through appellate practice.

Our firm encompasses all facets of divorce and family law proceedings, while giving complete individualized attention to our clients.

While we encourage and actively pursue settlements, if the need arises we are aggressive litigators and have appeared and proceeded in all boroughs of New York City as well as Nassau County. The firm has argued before the First, Second and Third Departments of the Appellate Division in New York State.

The areas of practice are prenuptial agreements, divorce and custody matters, high net-worth matters, business evaluations and appellate practice. Martin Friedlander has lectured before the Bar Association as well as provided continuing legal education for national associations. The firm has many published case decisions. Our clients' satisfaction is our goal.

The Law Office of Martin Friedlander, PC. has appeared and is knowledgeable in all areas of mediation and arbitration including Rabbinical Court and the issues pertaining to a religious divorce (Get).

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Casey represents clients in all areas of matrimonial and family practice.

Casey's clients, many of whom are high-profile figures and high net worth individuals with sensitive matters, appreciate her intellectual acumen and understanding of their concerns. She is a skilled negotiator, and most of her matters settle out of court. Some cases require decisive action through litigation, and Casey has taken financial and custody cases through trial in courts in the New York area and in Washington, D.C. She has brought her exceptional analytic abilities and writing skills to success at the appellate level.

Beyond the courthouse, she has run a conference session on divorce for a think tank in Washington, D.C., and has been interviewed about legal issues by outlets including The New York Times and Forbes. She has written about law for many publications.

Casey has been recognized by Super Lawyers. She is a graduate of Yale College and Yale Law School.

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JILL C. STONE, ESQ., PC



Standing left to right: Audrey Mars, Janet Faber, Jenna Rosato, Grace Addabbo, Helen Eichler
Seated left to right: Melissa Studin-Young, Jill C. Stone

For nearly three decades, Jill Stone has provided zealous advocacy on matrimonial and family law issues. She started out practicing alongside her brother and her father—a top criminal defense lawyer in Queens—at the firm Addabbo & Greenberg, and she soon found her niche representing children in challenging matrimonial cases.

“Early on in my career I decided to serve as a court-appointed attorney for children in Nassau County, and that experience really helped me understand how divorce proceedings affect children,” Stone says. “I continue to draw on those insights to this day, because they allow me to guide clients to resolutions that best suit their children.”

While Stone remains affiliated with Addabbo & Greenberg (which also handles criminal, personal injury, corporate, wills and estates, and real estate law), she has since established her own firm—an all-female family law practice that represents men and

women equally. “I pride myself on hiring associates who are compassionate and can empathize from their personal experience,” Stone notes. “Everyone here works collaboratively, and that ensures an attorney will always be available to answer clients’ questions.”

As an authority in her field, Stone has been interviewed by television and print outlets and asked to lecture at Hofstra University School of Law and St. John’s University School of Law. In 2014, she was included in *Super Lawyers* (associate Melissa Studin Young was named to the “Rising Stars” list), and previously she received the Court Officers Benevolent Association’s Juridis Peridis Award, which acknowledges outstanding lawyers in the profession.

Beyond her practice, Stone mentors high school and law school students throughout the year and serves on the Advisory Board of We Care, Nassau County Bar Association’s charitable arm. Indeed, she is affiliated with many bar associations, including as a newly appointed board member to the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts’ New York Chapter. Stone is also a longtime member of the Character and Fitness Committee of the Appellate Division, Second Department and of the Advisory Committee for Judicial Hearing Officers.

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Standing, left to right: Elisa Bejaran (Paralegal); Naomi M. S. Silkowitz, Esq. (Associate)
Seated, left to right: Nancy M. Green, Esq. (Partner); Barbara Burger, Esq. (Partner)

BURGER & GREEN, LLP

From offices in Midtown Manhattan’s historic Graybar Building, the attorneys of Burger & Green, LLP work to provide high-quality family law services to clients throughout New York and internationally. For years, the firm’s attorneys have served as proud and active members of New York’s legal community, and they bring considerable experience and legal knowledge to the area of matrimonial law.

“Our clients have varying backgrounds, professions, and income levels, but what they all share is a need for trusted representation on these sensitive issues,” says partner Barbara Burger, who has been handling family law for more than 40 years. “The matters we deal with, such as divorce and child custody, go to the very essence of our clients’ lives, so we feel a tremendous responsibility to realize their goals.”

Attorneys at the firm have successfully represented their clients’ interests in a wide range of family law matters, including divorce, child custody, child support, prenuptial and postnuptial agreements, and international child abduction (Hague) cases.

The firm also provides services for real estate transactions,

representing buyers and sellers in residential and commercial real estate closings.

“We take a custom-tailor approach when representing our clients because no two cases are the same,” notes partner Nancy Green, who began practicing with Burger in 1995 and was recently listed in *Super Lawyers*. “Divorce can be very difficult for people, and to make this time more manageable for them, we try to connect with our clients on a personal level and really walk them through the divorce process.”

For this reason, the firm obtains much of its work through referrals from past clients as well as from other lawyers. Indeed, the firm is well respected in the legal community, with its members receiving recognition in *Super Lawyers* and serving in prominent bar organizations, such as the New York State Bar, New York Women’s Bar, and New York City Bar Associations.

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New York matrimonial law includes some of the most complicated laws and legal procedures in the country. Ms. Radna says, "My firm understands that clients need an attorney who listens to what they have to say, what their needs are, what their children's needs are and how the law applies to their particular situation so that we can work together toward a successful outcome."

A client recently stated with regard to her child custody case, "The only attorney I would ever recommend you should have by your side would be Sandra M. Radna Esq. The service she provides will far exceed your expectations and expense."

Divorce and Family Court battles are often emotionally draining. When clients retain Law Offices of Sandra M. Radna, P.C., Ms. Radna says "they will have a compassionate attorney who fights aggressively for them in the courtroom." As succinctly stated by another one of her clients, "Sandra is a pit bull...with a heart".

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Ms. Hillman is AV Preeminent® Rated by Martindale-Hubbell® and has been designated a Super Lawyer. She is a Special Master, Civil Court, ADR Neutral, New York County Supreme Court.

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Top from left to right: Jordan E. Trager, Lisa M. Gardner
Bottom, from left to right: Lloyd C. Rosen, Derrick A. Rubin,
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One of the largest family law firms on Long Island, WH&A is a highly respected firm with a record of proven success in and out of the courtroom. With the resources to handle family law matters from simple to complex, we use inventive strategies to resolve cases successfully and cost effectively, whether through mediation, negotiated settlements or litigation.

With over 40 years of experience, founder Jerome A. Wisselman imparts a wealth of knowledge to clients. His

reputation as a caring provider of exceptional representation is well known. "We hold ourselves to a high standard. Our priority is protecting the best interests of our clients and their children." Jerry is a recipient of the *Leadership in the Law* award; a *LI Top Ten Legal Eagle*, Martindale Hubbell's Client Distinction award, and a *NY Super Lawyer*.

Partner Jacqueline Harounian is a tenacious negotiator and litigator who nonetheless believes that a negotiated settlement before trial is almost always the preferred outcome for her clients. She is consistently ranked as one of the best attorneys practicing in her field, and is greatly revered by her clients and her peers. Rated "AV-Preeminent" by Martindale-Hubbell, she's been named a *NY Super Lawyer* for five consecutive years, and selected twice for *Top 50 Women Lawyers* — the only Long Island attorney on this list.

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Now you have an experienced New York Divorce/Family Law attorney on your side. Ellen Maurer, Esq., a partner in the firm, Goldman & Maurer, LLP, has been specializing in Matrimonial/Family Law for more than 25 years, and practicing more than 30 years. When you're faced with the daunting challenge of dividing substantial personal, family and business assets, and complex child custody and support issues, you need a New York divorce/family law attorney who is highly experienced. That is Ellen Maurer Esq., who is known to aggressively and pragmatically negotiate and litigate, if necessary, divorce, property division, child custody and support issues. She is well known in the Nassau, Suffolk Courts, as well as the five boroughs, for her strong results, excellent litigation skills and practical solutions to complex family problems which require a creative solution. Ellen Maurer, Esq., cares about the people she represents and their children, helping you to discover the best alternative for your unique situation.

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With offices in New York and New Jersey, Hartmann Doherty's Private Client Services Group includes a team of highly experienced Matrimonial, Trusts & Estates and Elder Law attorneys. The attorneys counsel individuals in a wide range of matters involving personal, emotional and sensitive legal issues that affect every aspect of families in transition, including:

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We also have an active and experienced estate litigation practice that represents clients in will contests, guardianship proceedings and disputes concerning the distribution and administration of estates and trusts.



Standing, from left to right: Angela J. Kim, Nathan J. Seifert, Ashley B. Slobodkin
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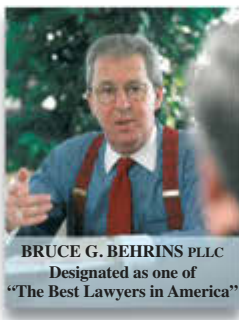
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The Behrins Law Firm is a full service law firm offering a wide variety of legal services. The firm practices in all federal courts, and in New York, New Jersey, and Washington, D.C., and through affiliated relationships in jurisdictions across the United States and internationally.

Several former members of our firm have gone on to public service as legislators and judges including a Member of Congress, New York State Assembly persons, New York City Council persons, judges of the New York City Family Court, the New York City Criminal Court, the New York City Civil Court, the New York State Supreme Court, the Suffolk County, District Court, and the Federal Eastern District Court.

Members of our firm have tried over 1,200 jury and non-jury cases to conclusion, roughly 800 of them being matrimonial or divorce cases (three of which were – unusually – jury trials) involving custody, child support, alimony, pensions, real estate and the equitable distribution of

professional licenses and practices and businesses. Another (roughly) 600 were settled before or during trial.

It is believed that one of our divorce trials resulted in the largest monetary verdict ever in New York State against a single asset, in that case, a medical license valued in millions of dollars.

The three principals have a total of more than 95 years' admission to practice in New York State, New Jersey, and Washington, D.C., and all are admitted to the practice of law before the courts of this State, the Supreme Court of the United States, and the United States District Court for the Southern and Eastern Districts. The firm is actively engaged in the practice of law and has prosecuted and defended actions in all of the state's courts of original jurisdiction, as well as in the federal courts. We are a boutique trial lawyers' firm, as trier of our own cases and as trial counsel for other attorneys.

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Awidely respected boutique divorce law firm, Berkman Bottger Newman & Rodd is one of the only matrimonial firms in New York City with specialized experience in the full range of divorce processes, from litigation to collaborative law to mediation. "When people walk into our offices and want to be divorced but are unsure of their options, we can provide them with different process choices for moving forward," notes Jacqueline Newman. The firm's reputation for excellence is built on its in-depth experience with high-value, complex financial cases and on its history of achieving positive and highly satisfactory results for its clients. Beyond their expertise, the firm's lawyers are known for their strong, yet compassionate, representation and close working relationships with their clients. In every case, the firm emphasizes responsive, personal service and an absolute commitment to its clients. "Our clients are going through an extraordinarily difficult time in their lives, and they know they can count on us to be there for them," says Barry Berkman. Berkman Bottger Newman & Rodd exclusively handles family and divorce law in the greater New York City area, including Westchester and in New Jersey.



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Changes to the family dynamic can disrupt both business and personal relationships, undermining long-term objectives. Pryor Cashman's Family Law Group brings clarity and stability in times of family crisis. Among the most respected attorneys in the field, with extensive trial and appellate court experience, skilled at settlement and mediation, and finely attuned to issues ranging from child custody to business valuation, we have all the tools needed to achieve successful outcomes for clients when it matters most.



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Lisa R. Schoenfeld, Joseph A. DeMarco, Jennifer Rosenkrantz,
Hillary Reinhartz

SCHLISSEL OSTROW KARABATOS (SOK) IS AN INNOVATIVE matrimonial and family law firm with a reputation for handling the most complicated financial, valuation, and property distribution cases, as well as the most difficult custody and support issues.

"WE'RE WILLING TO CHALLENGE WHAT PEOPLE think are established principles," notes managing partner Elena Karabatos. "When the law is undeveloped or still developing, this firm has never hesitated to try and make new law for the betterment of our clients."

INDEED, SOK HAS REGULARLY CHALLENGED CASE law to protect its clients' interests. SOK attorneys were among the first lawyers in the country to prevent a parent from smoking in the presence of her children, and they pioneered new law in the areas of settlement agreements and custody evaluations.

"WE TAKE PRIDE IN BRINGING THE HIGHEST DEGREE of excellence, integrity, and creativity to the practice of matrimonial law," says partner Stephen W. Schlissel. "Although we have the depth and expertise to aggressively litigate the largest and most complex matters, we are also extraordinarily aware of the emotional component of family law; and because of that, we often take a more nuanced approach in order to deliver a superior result for the client in the long run."

THE ATTORNEYS OF SOK BEGIN EACH CASE BY evaluating the situation from a holistic perspective, taking into account the personalities of the clients. And while the firm's attorneys are experienced trial lawyers, they regularly address issues by using alternative resolution methods, such as negotiation, mediation, arbitration, and collaborative law.

GIVEN THEIR EXPERTISE, IT SHOULD COME AS NO surprise that the firm's lawyers have garnered significant recognition from their peers. SOK is one of the few firms in the country with four Fellows of the prestigious American

Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers (AAML), and one Diplomate of the American College of Family Trial Lawyers, which limits membership to 100 attorneys across the country. The firm's active name partners have also been selected for inclusion in *New York Super Lawyers* and *The Best Lawyers in America*, with Schlissel's having been named in every edition of both publications. In addition, Karabatos and Schlissel are named in Ten Leaders, Matrimonial and Divorce Law, Long Island, New York.

AS LEADERS OF THE BAR, THE FIRM'S LAWYERS HAVE achieved a number of honors in the family law field. Schlissel was a recipient of the 2013 Distinguished Service Medallion, the highest honor bestowed by the Nassau County Bar Association (NCBA); he has also been named to the Independent Judicial Election Qualifications Commission for the 10th Judicial District (Nassau & Suffolk Counties) and is a member of the Board of Governors of the New York State Attorney-Client Fee Dispute Resolution Board. Karabatos, meanwhile, serves as treasurer of the NCBA and President of the New York Chapter of the AAML. Retired partner Michael J. Ostrow served as president of the NCBA, president of the AAML National, and chair of the Family Law Section of the New York State Bar Association (NYSBA).

BEYOND THE FIRM'S NAME PARTNERS, ATTORNEYS Joseph A. DeMarco and Lisa R. Schoenfeld have been named as *Super Lawyers Rising Stars*, and have been elected to the AAML. Jennifer Rosenkrantz is vice chair of the NCBA's Matrimonial and Family Law Committee and is named Ten Leaders, Matrimonial and Divorce Law, Long Island, New York – Age 45 & Under, and has been nominated to be a director of the NCBA. Schoenfeld is also the past chair of the Young Lawyers Committee of the NYSBA.

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192 COLUMBIA HEIGHTS



Classical elegance only begins to describe this exquisitely restored five-story mansion that looms grandly above the Promenade between Pierrepont and Clark Streets at 192 Columbia Heights. Panoramic views take in the harbor, Statue of Liberty and lower Manhattan. Each floor of the brownstone not only boasts those wide views but its spacious rooms bathe in exceptional light. Add this to the eye-bending mix—a rare 25-foot building width and a full basement level for mechanicals and a vault for a wine cellar—and it is no wonder this dream home is the talk of Brooklyn Heights.

Built in 1859, the house sports the best of 19th century details while beaming with updated 21st century standards. All of 16 rooms and 7,900-square

feet, the house has a parlor floor with 14-foot ceilings, a gracious entry, stunning living room and a grand formal dining room with doors opening onto a perfect deck.

Upstairs are six bedrooms (with room for a seventh), a library, two offices, and a gym on the top floor with sweeping harbor views and vast closet space.

All told, there are three full baths and two half baths, an eat-in chef's kitchen with a large pantry and a functioning dumbwaiter to the parlor level. The manse has three wood-burning fireplaces, central air, a security system, wireless Internet and a Sony and Apple-based built-in audio system. The layout of this one-of-a-kind house can easily accommodate an elevator if the new owners desire. Bay windows look onto the harbor from the entire backside of the house. Stand out on either of the two terraces or the roof and take a gander far and wide, listen to the tooting boats. Narrow your gaze and it could be 1860 all over again.



A prized address near the Heights Promenade, this gorgeous home is near to Brooklyn Bridge Park with its waterfront greenway, playgrounds, bike trails, picnic areas, beach, sports, music and recreational events, plus excellent shops, restaurants and area conveniences.

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Written by David Butwin



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This elegant and spacious colonial beckons from the private Kensington Woods gated community in the appealing and eminently reachable Westchester suburb of New Rochelle.

An elegant entry foyer leads to a formal dining room and a formal living room. A huge gourmet eat-in kitchen with a fireplace and tiled floor adjoins a gorgeous family room with soaring cathedral ceilings and its own fireplace—it is an ideal entertaining space. There are handsome hardwood floors throughout and there is a huge carpeted basement.

This two-story, nearly 3,900-square foot beauty is barely ten years old and sports four bedrooms, four baths and two half-baths. The main floor also includes an au-pair/guest room. The master suite on the second floor has two full baths and two walk-in closets, with additional storage.

An elevator connects the basement with the first and second floors, and there is Central Air.

Conveniently and handsomely located at the north end of New Rochelle, Kensington Woods is close to transportation and just off the Hutchinson Parkway, providing a quick and easy run to New York City. Fine shops, restaurants, buzzing cafés and galleries are a short drive away.

The grounds around this dream house, alive with shrubs and flowers, are meticulously maintained by the Kensington Woods homeowner's association—no mowing or hedging for the owners, no lawn service to hire if you are away on vacation. Pricing \$1,425,000. IMMEDIATE.



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The building's limestone and brick exterior is being meticulously preserved and restored to its original appearance. The residences offer a range of outdoor spaces ideal for private relaxation or for outdoor parties, with the bonus of sweeping views of Central Park and the New York skyline.

Carlton House presents a wide selection of two- to six-bedrooms, each bearing the stamp of Katherine Newman Design, whose interiors reinterpret the finest elements of the early 20th century Art Deco and Moderne movements.

Choose from two palettes—the lighter Pearl features white oak flooring in living rooms and bedrooms; powder rooms feature an elegant grey and white marble mosaic floor. Residences done in the warmer Mink palette come with ebonized white oak flooring and powder rooms with a herringbone black and white patterned marble mosaic floor. Custom vanities pick up the best qualities of each palette, Pearl and Mink.

The overall understated elegance of the residences shows up in the many carefully considered design elements, among them finely crafted wide-plank white oak floors, custom kitchen cabinetry and decorative details made from natural materials.

The Carlton House further distinguishes itself with peerless service on a 24-hour basis. Along with a uniformed doorman and concierge, a dedicated lifestyle consultant is available to assist residents with a range of personal needs. Included in a raft of impressive building features and services are an indoor swimming pool, a state of the art fitness center, steam rooms, a game room, bike and private storage and a cold storage room.



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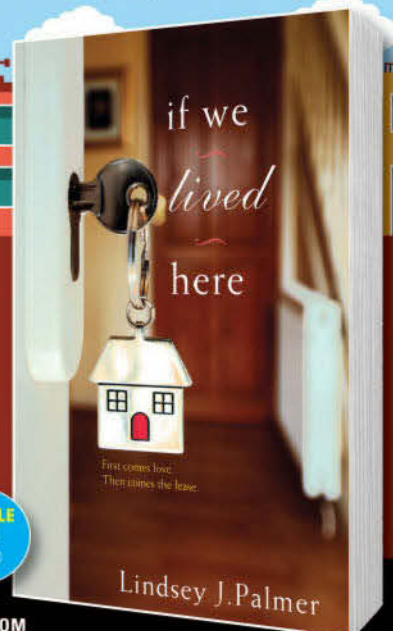
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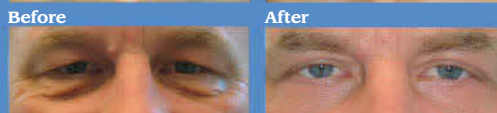
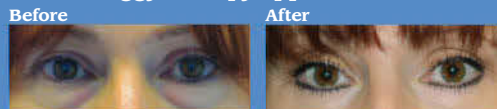
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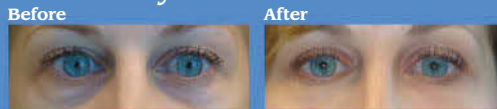
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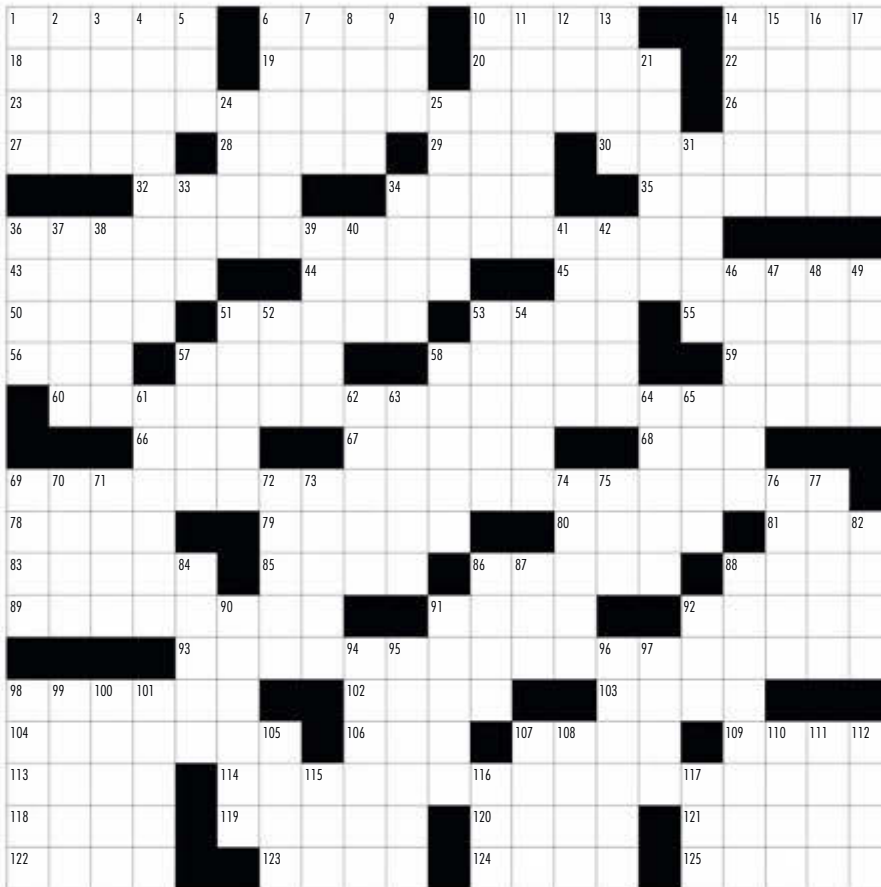
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Prefix Mix-ups

New York Crossword by Cathy Allis



Across

- 1 Language of Iran
6 Demolish
10 Legally invalid
14 Urban haze
18 A way to read
19 Midterm or final
20 Makeup magnate Lauder
22 Mob boss
23 Not mugging for the camera while directing surgery?
26 See 5-Down
27 Kuwaiti ruler
28 Coffeehouse vessels
29 "The Raven" poet's initials.
30 Twin, to his or her twin
32 "By the power vested ____ ..."
34 Archipelago part
35 Crows' homes
36 Work of offing jailbirds?
43 Wind ensemble members
44 Torah cabinets
45 Fitness-regimen component
50 Trading places?
51 Foyer
53 Brewer's grain
55 Wine grape
56 Apt name for a cook?
57 Sage, for one
58 City of northern France

- 59 Finned mammalian killer
60 Fan out arranged all wrong, as a bungling marching band?
66 Goof up
67 Western flick
68 Noteworthy period
69 Criticize contract bits about staying open?
78 The Bard's river
79 The fable guy?
80 Position of control
81 Designated-driver alternative
83 Super 8, say
85 Nothing, in Nantes
86 Showy spring bloomer
88 Gillian Flynn best seller "____ Girl"
89 Diplomatic etiquette
91 Uplifting lingerie
92 United competitor
93 Person in favor of weight loss, say?
98 Say "say say", say
102 Longtime Yankees nickname
103 Licorice-flavored liqueur, in France
104 First name in a Beatles title
106 ATM-keypad input
107 Prefix with cultural

- 109 Corn Belt state
113 Takes to court
114 Sense one's former spouse is being too well taken care of?
118 Loafing
119 Grows dim
120 Like Airedales' coats
121 Salt away
122 Late finish?
123 Blog entry
124 Perform to a tee
125 Sophia of "Nine" (2009)

Down

- 1 Charge for 81-Across
2 Coll. endowment source
3 Rice-A- ____
4 Dawns
5 With 26-Across, infamous Ugandan despot
6 Rue
7 Neuron appendage
8 Nukes in the microwave
9 Ostrich's fast-running cousin
10 Kathmandu native
11 Final tennis Grand Slam event
12 Columbo and Kojak: abbr.
13 Dregs
14 It shows between cornrows
15 1950s First Lady
16 Speak one's mind
17 Music discs?
21 Person who rights copy
24 Deaden
25 Crows' homes
31 Forties jazz style
33 Greek consonants
34 Eww-inspiring
36 The po-po
37 The late news, in brief?
38 Still in bed
39 Maimonides was one
40 Wall St. maven, for short
41 Vintner Ernest or Julio
42 Yankees giant Derek
46 Ecological groupings by region
47 Letters on a some crosses
48 Gabrielle Chanel, by nickname
49 Satirist Freberg (R.I.P.)
51 Find out
52 Chicago airport code
53 Tightwad
54 Actress Woodward
57 Horizontal kin of a Dagwood
58 All aglow
61 Cheesemaking substance
62 The rope of one's end?
63 Stoneworker
64 Like an old apple
65 Calla-lily family
69 Humid
70 Singer-actor Novello
71 Explorer Hernando de ____
72 Ricochet
73 Heroine in Bizet's "The Pearl Fishers" ("I, Ella" anagram)
74 Settled on
75 Spy novelist Deighton
76 Potentially dangerous bacterium
77 Domingo or Tomás
82 Noggin
84 Lindsay of "Mean Girls"
86 Goad
87 Musical aptitude
88 Starts relishing
90 Interrupt abruptly
91 Co-op City's borough
92 Early seventh-century year
94 Italian port noted for pizza
95 Professional in a confessional
96 Baseball's Strawberry
97 Course-work segment
98 Varnish ingredient
99 Slip away from
100 Facial treatments
101 Mitigates
105 Gather in
107 Athletic-shoe brand
108 Former Spice Girl Halliwell
110 Effect of halitosis
111 Used to be
112 Yemeni port
115 Old name for Tokyo
116 Part of BYOB
117 Subj. for new citizens

The poster features a dark blue background adorned with intricate green line-art illustrations of various plants and flowers. Scattered throughout are illustrations of outdoor furniture: a white wicker chair with pink accents in the top left, a white side table in the top right, a white patio umbrella with orange ribs in the middle left, a white lounge chair with orange wheels in the middle right, and a white wicker chair with a blue cushion in the bottom right. The word 'Knoll' is prominently displayed at the top in a bold, orange, sans-serif font.

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THE APPROVAL MATRIX

Our deliberately oversimplified guide to who falls where on our taste hierarchies.

HIGHBROW

Post-Fed, Ben Bernanke takes the **revolving door** into Citadel, the hedge fund.



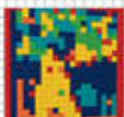
Christie's expects that someone will pay **\$130 million** for Giacometti's *Man Pointing* (1947), which is odd because you can get a perfectly nice midtown penthouse for that much.



"Newspaper reporter" tops CareerCast's annual **worst-jobs** list, after ceding the title to lumberjacks in 2014. (Lois Lane is now aggregating branded-content listicles.)



The Hole stumbles into a **conceptual pothole** with a show called "Post Analog Painting."



The *Times* reports that Hillary has been **dodging questions** about her email for over two years.



Armed old men playing policeman: "Oh, I shot him. I'm sorry."



There are **over 400 people** who have been held in Rikers for more than two years without being convicted of a crime.



According to British medical journal *The BMJ*, health apps might **just** give healthy people **anxiety**. Sort of like most apps, actually.



Spiders "**collaborate**" with Tomás Saraceno to make sculptures at Tanya Bonakdar Gallery.



Jake Gyllenhaal to show off his **green thumb** as Seymour in *Little Shop of Horrors* at City Center this summer.

George Lucas proposes building 224 units of affordable housing on his Skywalker Ranch in wealthy Marin County (local **Sith Lords** are skeptical).



Richard Prince's fun framed-up **pulp** covers in "Untitled (original)" at Gagosian uptown.



Higher power: A Dutch designer created a stained-glass window that **generates electricity**.



Alexandrian Summer, the 1978 novel of lost **cosmopolitanism** by Yitzhak Gormezano Gore, newly translated from Hebrew.



The **mad whirl** of Olga Pericet's "Flamenco Sin Título" at Repertorio Español.

MoMA's **utopic** "Latin America in Construction" exhibit.



Bruce Ratner to restore the old Brooklyn Paramount—and its **Wurlitzer organ** still works!

Lena Hall's rendition of "**Take Me to Church**" at the Café Carlyle.



If **Sunday school** had been as much fun as it is in *Hand to God*, we might've gone more often.

BRILLIANT

DESPICABLE



Could RuPaul's new E! plastic-surgery show, *Good Work*, please **sashay away**?



Madonna's oddball **cougar-comedy act** on *The Tonight Show*.

De Niro derides de Blasio over a lack of city funds for the Tribeca Film Festival.

According to restaurant-employee activists, the welfare bill supplementing underpaid workers is \$196,970 per year per Olive Garden. **Let them eat breadsticks?**



Justin Bieber reportedly threw a fit when he wasn't allowed to chill with Drake at Coachella and had to be put in a **chokehold**.

Japanese brewer Suntory is introducing a new beer called Precious that's infused with two grams of collagen to keep your beer gut **supple and youthful**.



Freedom isn't free: It will cost you the full price of admission to the viewing floor—\$32—to go to the restaurant atop One World Trade Center.



A Florida man believed to be high on flakka was arrested after committing a (presumably nonconsensual) **"sexual act"** on a tree.



Music to **steal cars** by? The funky Grand Theft Auto-inspired "Speedline Miracle Masterpiece," by Tunde Adebimpe featuring Sal P and Sinkane.

New York's Alright punk-rock fest—featuring S.H.I.T., Warthog, Bad Noids—a **blessedly yoga-free**, anti-Coachella zone.



Jon Snow sure is a decent chap. (That **never bodes well** for anyone in Westeros.)

Good news for people **too stoned** to get off the couch: Taco Bell is going to start delivering.



Slovak chic had to happen eventually: Baba's Pierogies to open in Gowanus.



Iris, the new documentary about **Iris Apfel**, 93, directed by also-iconic Albert Maysles (who made it to only 88).



Disco Swede Erik Hassle's irresistible "No Words."



Polymorphous, **power-pantsuited** Pima on *Mad Men*.



Netflix's *Daredevil* has the most **gorgeously violent** fight scenes on TV.



When Cookie met **Cookie Monster** on *SNL*.

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